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Under the hood of the
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How Sackboy is building on greatness

DESTINY

Hands-on with the best
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AND THE PLAYSTATION
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**THE LAST OF US
REMASTERED**

Reviewed! Game Of The
Year twice running?

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GUARDIAN DOWN



I DON'T KNOW about you, but I really miss *Destiny*. Even though the beta only offered a relatively modest slice of content, I enjoyed what was there enough to max out my Hunter with the best gear and abilities that the limited level cap would allow, and still I couldn't stop playing. I get addicted to things far too easily, which is even more ridiculous with unfinished games like this, when I'll only have to do it all again on release. It's not the first time, either – in the *FFXIV* beta, I did countless hours of pointless mining and grinding, while I managed to rack up over 100 hours on an early build of *Dark Souls II* that I couldn't even take online. Most people don't put that kind of time into lost causes or at least if they do, they won't be bothered to do it all again. I am not most people. Oddly, I can't wait to do it all again.

You see, my favourite games are those that promote self-improvement, ones where each run is more impressive than the last. Learning each battle in *Monster Hunter* until you can dance around the beasts naked without taking a hit is a perfect example, as is the practice-makes-perfect rise to five stars and beyond in rhythm-action games like *Rock Band*. By putting the hours in with early versions of games, I'm able to apply what I've learned when the full release comes around and my 'proper' runs tend to be streamlined and more successful as a result – going back to *Dark Souls II* after blitzing the review version, my retail character hit level 100 in just a few short hours as I screamed along a perfect racing line, leaving boss after butchered boss in my wake.

And *Destiny* will be no different. I know my chosen class inside and out. I know my way around. I know what gear to look out for, and where best to find it. And in a few short weeks, I'll be eagerly applying all of that to a game that I'm likely going to put more time into than any other this year. Sorry, every other game. It's nothing personal.

Enjoy the issue, and I'll see ya on the moon.

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CURRENTLY PLAYING
The Last Of Us Remastered (PS4)

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**PLAYSTATION
ALL-STARS**

The heroes we need, the
heroes we deserve

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PLAYSTATION ALL-STARS

Meet the heroes of the most explosive new games on PS4





NATHAN DRAKE

WHO IS HE?

Drake is the affable hero of Naughty Dog's *Uncharted* series, arguably the most important and well-known PlayStation-exclusive franchise of recent times. He's an explorer and a treasure hunter in the vein of Indiana Jones, always ready with a smart quip and a cheeky smile, often escaping from danger by the skin of his teeth but staying (sort of) cool under pressure.

Through the course of three games and a prequel spin-off, Nate has fought various bad guys and even some supernatural threats in his time, as well as getting married, separated and then kind of married again. Sure, he kills quite a lot of people out of what is essentially greed (he needs to get the ancient treasure before they do!) but we can ignore this particular tonal discrepancy. Drake is a Saturday-morning action hero, and he's easy to love despite his occasional sociopathic tendencies.

"HE KILLS QUITE A LOT OF PEOPLE OUT OF WHAT IS ESSENTIALLY GREED"

WHAT'S NEXT?

Uncharted 4: A Thief's End on PS4, tentatively scheduled for 2015, will bring our boy Nate kicking and screaming into the new generation. From what we've seen so far, Drake seems a fair bit older now, sporting some grey hairs and considerably roughed up. Could this really be the end for *Uncharted*? If so, we have faith that Naughty Dog will give the series a fitting send-off.

WHY IS HE IMPORTANT?

Really? He's important because he is, essentially, the modern Crash Bandicoot. Wait, wait, hear us out. Naughty Dog has been making platform-defining exclusives for Sony since the PSone, and *Uncharted* has been a huge success on PS3. Nate is synonymous with the PlayStation brand, and the announcement of *Uncharted 4* was a huge bombshell that has no doubt fuelled plenty of PS4 sales. While the *Uncharted* series has never had brilliant plotting, its characterisation is top form, and Drake is one of the most loved videogame characters of the last decade.

SNAKE



WHO IS HE?

He's one of the most well-known videogame protagonists of all time, that's who. That said, there are technically two Snakes: Solid Snake, the hero of *Metal Gear Solid 1, 2 and 4*, and Naked Snake/Big Boss, his dad and the protagonist of *MGS3, Peace Walker, Ground Zeroes* and the upcoming *MGSV: The Phantom Pain*.

SNAKE (Big Boss) was an American spec ops agent, a hero who becomes disillusioned with his country after being forced to kill his mentor. By the start of *Ground Zeroes*, Snake is the leader of his own military force, but things go badly and his home base is destroyed, with Snake ending up in a coma for nine years. *The Phantom Pain* is all about his quest for revenge, and should detail his gradual change into the more villainous persona we see in the original two *Metal Gear* games.

"SNAKE BECOMES DISILLUSIONED WITH HIS COUNTRY AFTER BEING FORCED TO KILL HIS MENTOR"

WHY IS HE IMPORTANT?

An entire generation of gamers grew up playing *Metal Gear Solid* and loving every second. Solid Snake and Big Boss are icons to these people, and while the games might not be exclusive anymore, for a long time *Metal Gear* was only available on a PlayStation system. It's still clearly the best place to play the series, as *Ground Zeroes* and *The Phantom Pain* run at a higher resolution and look noticeably better on PS4 compared to Xbox One.

Millions of young adults who perhaps don't follow gaming as closely as they once did still get excited about a new *Metal Gear Solid* game, and it's largely thanks to the recognition they have for Snake. It's simple – nobody else in games does badass quite as well.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Coming next year (hopefully) will be *Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain*, the second and main part of *MGSV* after standalone introduction, *Ground Zeroes*. The game is a reinvention of the stealth action that the series is known for, introducing an open world for the first time while retaining the tight sneaking we all love. With a map that is at least 200 times as large as *Ground Zeroes*, *The Phantom Pain* is going to be a huge game that we can't wait to get our hands on.



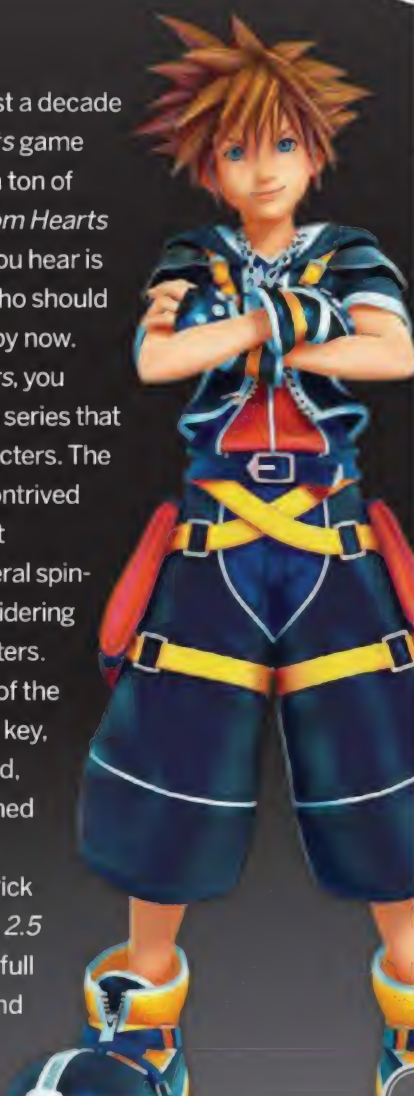


SORA

Welcome back, buddy. It's been almost a decade since we saw a proper *Kingdom Hearts* game (although, to be fair, there have been a ton of handheld spin-offs) but finally, *Kingdom Hearts III* is on the way for PS4. That sound you hear is the joyous cries of millions of adults who should probably have grown out of this stuff by now.

If you haven't played *Kingdom Hearts*, you probably still know about it – this is the series that blends *Final Fantasy* with Disney characters. The whole thing is a bit silly, but from the contrived concept has sprung a series with a vast backstory and universe, spanning several spin-off games and telling an epic tale, considering Donald Duck is one of the main characters.

Sora is our main character, wielder of the Keyblade (it's a sword that looks like a key, go figure). Alongside Goofy and Donald, Sora travels to distant worlds, all themed after Disney films, to find and save his friends and later the entire universe. Pick up *Kingdom Hearts 1.5 HD Remix* and *2.5* when it comes out later this year for a full refresher course in what's going on, and get ready for number three!



GRAYSON

A new face, but hopefully one that will represent the PS4 going forward, is Grayson of *The Order: 1886*. In this alternate history, a centuries-long war between humans and beastmen has led to the Knights of the Round Table existing through the ages, with new warriors taking up the mantles of the famous legends each generation. 1886's Galahad is Grayson, our hero and a knight who has already battled the beastmen for hundreds of years thanks to magical substances keeping his aging slowed.

The Order: 1886 is shaping up to be one of the excellent new breed of PlayStation exclusive, a cinematic shooter from the skilled team at Ready At Dawn, the studio behind the excellent *God Of War* PSP games. Looking to straddle the line between film and games, it's coming 20 February 2015, and will hopefully start the year off right for what could be one of the best 12 months of PlayStation gaming ever.



RATCHET & CLANK

There have been approximately a million *Ratchet & Clank* games (well, 13 including spin-offs, but that's close enough) but the series is by no means done. Along with a feature film next year, the popular franchise is also being re-imagined for PS4, promising a new look at the origins of our furry hero and his mechanical companion.

Ratchet and Clank are two of the few truly exclusive characters left as, aside from a couple of mobile titles, every game of theirs has been on PlayStation. While the two never achieved Crash or Spyro levels of fame, they have outlived their closest rivals Jak and Daxter and become firm favourites among a small but dedicated fan base. Ratchet's arsenal of ridiculous heavy weaponry has become the hallmark of the series, with each game managing to find more ways to creating hilarious and sometimes useful guns and gadgets. The reboot on PS4 and upcoming film could introduce a whole new audience to the characters, ensuring their lifespan for years to come.



THE MISHIMA FAMILY

Heihachi, Kazuya and Jin: familiar names to millions of PlayStation gamers. Easily the winners of the Most Dysfunctional Family In Games award, these three generations of Japanese martial arts masters have been trying to kill each other since the good old days. Heihachi and Kazuya are both pretty evil, and Jin has been known to cross over to the dark side from time to time.

Tekken might not be exclusive anymore, but the series has always been considered a PlayStation franchise by gamers. From the blocky Lego look of the first *Tekken* through to the smooth beauty of *Tekken Tag Tournament 2*, fighting game fans around the world have enjoyed the 3D fighting gameplay that *Tekken* delivers.

Tekken 7 has been confirmed to be in development, and while we haven't had word of platforms yet, we'll eat all the hats in the world if it doesn't come to PS4. The trailer once again revolved around the clash between Heihachi and Kazuya, with the tagline 'the final battle'. Yeah, we'll believe that one when we see it. More *Tekken* is always a good thing, and hopefully the Mishimas and all their brawling buddies will be gracing our consoles before the end of next year.



GERALT OF RIVIA

The Witcher might never have appeared on a PlayStation console before, but the huge amount of positive buzz that the new game is stirring up makes us think *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* will have a great reception regardless. Geralt is the most feared and infamous of the Witchers, warriors trained from birth and genetically modified to take down monsters and other evils that threaten the realms of humanity.

Geralt travels the land, slaying demons while staying uninvolved in the more human issues happening around him – or at least, that's the plan, but things never seem to be quite that simple. Over the years the guy has had a ton of adventures, but his third major outing is shaping up to be the best yet. We can see Geralt becoming a PlayStation hero for the PS4 generation, hopefully representing the console for years to come.



BATMAN

It's strange to think that Batman has only been a good name in videogames for the last few years. Before *Arkham Asylum*, there hadn't really been a good Batman games since the days of 16-bit 2D side-scrollers. Thankfully, Rocksteady decided to show everyone how it should be done and as a result, we can call Batman a modern-day gaming champion. The *Arkham* games are some of the strongest representations of the hero in modern media, arguably rivalling the excellent Christopher Nolan films. No other game has made you feel like the Caped Crusader quite as well.

Arkham Knight, the fourth game in the *Arkham* series, will only be hitting current-gen systems, so if you want to see the final chapter in the bat-adventures of the Dark Knight, it's time to jump on the PS4 train – if you haven't already.



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LARA CROFT

WHO IS SHE?

Lara Croft is one of the most important characters in the early days of the PlayStation, as well as the most widely recognised female videogame character of all time. Lara is an archaeologist, treasure hunter and adventurer from a very wealthy family – so she clearly isn't in it for the money.

Lara's depictions have changed over the years. Initially she was a batch of blocky polygons that, while unquestionably being a strong female character and role model, was still known to many gamers as a sex symbol. This was improved upon when Crystal Dynamics took over the series on PS2, with a soft reboot of the series making her more of a complete character.

This was taken even further with last year's full reboot, taking things back to the beginning and featuring a much younger Lara acting out of necessity and survival instinct. This Lara seems more like a real person than ever, albeit one that is still extremely good at darting about like a ninja and killing people – far better than we were at 21.

“LARA IS AN ARCHAEOLOGIST
AND ADVENTURER FROM A VERY
WEALTHY FAMILY”

WHY IS SHE IMPORTANT?

If you remember the late Nineties, you remember just how huge Lara Croft became. Eidos licensed the character out for third-party advertisements, leading to Miss Croft appearing in ads for Visa, Lucozade, SEAT cars and various other things. She had real-life models represent her at events, she had comic books, feature films starring Angelina Jolie and even made the front page of the *Financial Times*.

Lara Croft was huge, and while her star might have waned somewhat over the last decade, last year's reboot has put her right back on that pedestal. It looks like Lara is still going to be important for years to come.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Next is *Rise Of The Tomb Raider* (yes, it's a dumb title), the sequel to the excellent reboot that will see Lara embrace her true nature as a thrill-seeking adventurer who enjoys the raiding of tombs. It's scheduled for late 2015 and we can't wait, but co-op action title *Lara Croft And The Temple Of Osiris* will be out before then.

SACKBOY

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WHO IS HE?

He's a little boy made of sack. Duh! Sackboy (or girl – it's up to you) is the hero and figurehead of Media Molecule's awesome *LittleBigPlanet* games, one of the newer PlayStation-exclusive franchises. Sackboy has no real character traits himself, but acts as a blank slate for the player to create their own avatar in-game. You can customise Sackboy with a ton of clothes and accessories, kitting the little guy out in some funky shades or even an awesome Wolverine costume. You can also make him pull a variety of funny and adorable faces at the touch of a button too – what's not to love about that?



“SACKBOY REPRESENTS THE CREATIVITY AND WONDER THAT NEVER REALLY LEAVES US”

WHY IS HE IMPORTANT?

Sackboy is important not so much for his own character but for what he represents. In an era of big, angry men carrying bigger, angrier guns through worlds of grey and brown, Sackboy and *LittleBigPlanet* offer a breath of fresh air. Cartoon mascots like Crash and Mario might not be as big as they once were, but Sackboy has still managed to become one of the de-facto faces of PS3, along with Nathan Drake. He's immediately recognisable to gamers, and there is a bunch of merchandise including figures of Sackboy in his many forms and outfits – the Jak one (Jakboy) is something of an office favourite.

But more than just being easily marketable, Sackboy represents the innocent creativity and wonder that never really leaves us, showing that games can be more than just blood and guts. Videogames can inspire and encourage, teach and reassure, or just be cute, silly and funny. Thanks, Sackboy!

WHAT'S NEXT?

Series creator Media Molecule is working on a mystery project for PS4, so Sumo Digital is taking up the reigns for *LittleBigPlanet 3*. Hopes are high for the first PS4 *LBP* game, and Sumo has added three new characters to aid Sackboy in his journey. Toggle is a big lump who can turn into a small version of himself, Swoop is a bird that can fly (as most birds tend to do) and Oddsock, our favourite, is a derpy dog-thing that is simply too cute for words. Hopefully the three of them will grow to become just as iconic as Sackboy.



MISSING IN ACTION

CRASH BANDICOOT

Oh, Crash. Once you were the unofficial mascot of the PSone, the orange marsupial hero we needed to go up against a portly Italian plumber and an anthropomorphic blue hedgehog with attitude. Your original four games, made by the masters at Naughty Dog, were fantastic, but since then it's been all downhill. Now owned by Activision, you are currently in limbo, no games on the horizon but still unable to be featured in anything else thanks to Activision's tight grip. Even if we do see another Crash game, odds are it won't be great. It might finally be time to say goodbye, let it go and put the poor bandicoot down.

DANTE

New Dante is as close to officially dead as Capcom will ever admit, as Ninja Theory will surely never make a new *Devil May Cry* game after the last one sold poorly. It's a shame, as we actually liked *DmC* and its new take on Dante, but let's be honest here. The thing we want the most – the thing *everyone* wants the most – is the return of classic white-haired Dante, presumably in *Devil May Cry 5*. Everyone wants it to happen Capcom – are you listening? Capcom's profits haven't been spectacular lately, the company largely kept afloat by *Monster Hunter*, but a new *Devil May Cry* would most likely help things, right?

KRATOS

Will there be another *God Of War* game, this time on PS4? We hope so, but the jury is still out for now. We hoped to maybe see something at this year's E3, but clearly that wasn't the case. Kratos is in a bad way at the end of *God Of War III* (a massive great hole through his gut, courtesy of a giant magic sword) but he's come back from worse. Hell, he gets killed and sent to Hades on two different occasions in the series. Of course, another option is yet another prequel, but we'd rather not. Come back to us, Kratos! We want to button-bash our way through some more mythological figures!





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Assassin's Creed: Unity

Four knives are better than one



"EACH ITERATION OF the game, we try to see what new features people really want and if it is possible," says Vincent Pointbriant, senior producer on *Assassin's Creed: Unity*. "The most requested feature by far was the ability to play with my friends. This is what a lot of people have been asking for, waiting for, and we are happy to deliver."

He is talking about *Unity*'s new co-op features, supporting up to four players tackling missions side by side. However, Pointbriant is promising the narrative focus and single-player story will not suffer as a result, with everybody controlling the main character from their own perspective.

"So basically, everyone is playing through the perspective of Arno, our main character. We didn't want to have two games. We wanted to have one sole experience and also we have to create the game which fits our universe rules, if that makes sense? We wanted everyone to craft their own play style through Arno, so you can customise him, his gear, his clothes, his skills, all of these things, and this is how you differentiate yourself from other players."

"When you're playing online, the only twist is that we're giving other players that you see, your friends, have a random face just so that they look like other assassins from the brotherhood. That's the twist, but we're not cheating, you know. Everyone's playing

Arno, everyone can play the main path, the main single-player campaign. And once they go on the brotherhood missions they keep on levelling up their character this way."

Questions arise as to how Ubisoft will blend its already tenuous grasp on history with missions that now support four bloodthirsty missions running around. Is it hard to stop players drastically altering the flow of time?

"It depends on the types of stories," says Pointbriant. "So all of the brotherhood missions are narrative based, so they are important moments of the French Revolution. But we can't rewrite history, so if this particular character wasn't killed

ARNO SURGE

While you will always appear to be controlling Arno yourself, you'll appear to everyone else as a random, nameless assassin in their game.

PIRACY DOESN'T PAY

We are disappointed that the awesome pirate bits of *Black Flag* are apparently nowhere to be seen in *Unity*. It makes sense given the new setting, though.


by anyone, he was lynched by the mob, then we will do that. If it's a more mysterious assassination that's not really well documented then yes, we'll take advantage of that and give the reward to one of the players – whoever gets there first, basically.

"In all of our missions, the design is basically the same for both co-op and single-player in the sense that they're all very open. We want to give more options, so you can decide to go all in all weapons blazing or sneak in, sneak out and play the mission entirely stealthy. So we have various ways to approach your targets using the different skills. Alone or in co-op it's basically the same philosophy, so it just works naturally when you play with friends because you can spread out and rejoin and your group can synchronise that way."

2014 will be an interesting year for *Assassin's Creed*, as the series sees two unique entries for the first time – one specifically developed for the last generation consoles known as *Comet*, and the other being exclusively for PS4, Xbox One and PC – *Unity*.

BILLY NO-MATES

Co-op might be the big new feature, but Ubisoft has guaranteed you'll be able to do things by yourself if that's how you prefer to play.



△○×□ While you are always playing as Arno from your own perspective, you'll appear as a random assassin to friends when you join them.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?



It's the first PlayStation 4-only *Assassin's Creed* title.



Explore the fascinating time period of the French Revolution.



Four-player co-op allows you to get stab-happy with your pals.



You can customise Arno to play the way you want.

Set in Paris during the French Revolution, the game will no doubt benefit from being developed solely for more powerful platforms, as we have already seen from the gameplay footage, huge hordes of unhappy citizens surging through the streets and views stretching into the far distance. Pointbriant is confident that his team has captured the atmosphere of the unstable era.

"History is our playground. We try to be historically accurate as much as possible, so whenever we can find a hole or something that's not as well documented we'll try to exploit it. Otherwise we try to respect history and just suggest things that might have happened to explain it. So yes, it's always a challenge, and we try to be very respectful. The French Revolution is a very complex period – there are no clear winners or losers.

"We used the French Revolution as just a background for the main story which is about Arno. So Arno is not like Forrest Gump, he's not necessarily involved in beheading the king or any of these things where it just wouldn't make sense and it wouldn't feel right. But you'll see these events that are happening, and you might be there to witness them from the shadows."

While *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag* took place mostly on the beautiful open seas of the Caribbean, *Unity* swaps the tropics for a grimy, overcrowded Paris. While some may be sad to see the sprawling seas swapped for sludgy sewers, Pointbriant insists this is the best city the series has seen to date.

"I think it's the most urban city we've ever had. It's the biggest city as well. We made a choice to focus entirely on Paris. Why? Because we wanted to make sure that we give the players a chance to explore it inside out. When I say that what I mean is that for the first time you can go inside loads of buildings, about one out of four buildings to be more precise. We're also having tiers for landmarks, we have the catacombs, we have the sewers and all these interesting places in Paris. The world is large, there's a billion things to do, and that was our main focus."

To complement this new city, the team at Ubisoft Montreal has also introduced a new movement system; a much-needed refresh after the old one was growing increasingly stale.

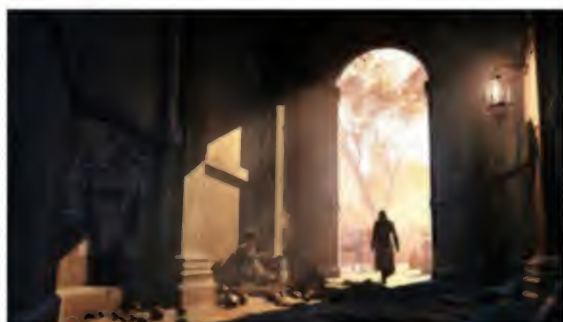
"Basically what we added was the ability to go up or down. So before we had the climbing which was vertical, and then we had free running which was more horizontal, so you could see these obvious 'highways' that we placed on the different buildings. And we wanted to make that more systemic and more fluid so we blended both systems and we called it parkour. And basically what you can do now is by pressing X Arno generally goes up and by pressing Circle he generally goes down. So this way it's much faster to go up a building or to go down. You don't necessarily have to find like an elevator to do a leap of faith. And then we change all of the animations to make it feel fresh."

Honestly, it doesn't sound particularly different to us, but we can't pass judgement until we've tried it ourselves. Another new feature is the addition of a point-based skill system, allowing players to level up and customise Arno to a greater extent than in games past, creating an assassin that plays just the way you like.

"So we have a skill system, which is point based, and it's up to you to decide do you want to invest in your fighting skills or would you rather put them in your stealth skills. So it will affect how you approach the missions. It works for single-player, and then obviously when you play with friends it just helps you complement each other because you might have chosen more of a stealth profile and your other friend has made his Arno more of a fighter, so it makes it interesting when you're playing with two, three, or four players."

One important question we have to ask is whether *Unity* will feature more of the divisive modern-day stuff that, quite frankly, bores us senseless and wastes our time when all we want to do is run about the past like a radical ninja. Unfortunately, Pointbriant assures us that the modern day interludes will continue.

"So we're going a bit further than *Black Flag*," Pointbriant begins. "We ended Desmond's story in *ACIII*, and then we made *Black Flag* about an Abstergo employee being contacted by assassins. So this time you start the game and then at some point you get contacted by the assassin order to



△○×□ Just because you can do most of the game in co-op doesn't mean you have to. Loner types will still be able to do their stabbing alone.

"HE'S NOT NECESSARILY INVOLVED IN BEHEADING THE KING OR ANYTHING"

explore the memories of Arno through the Animus and figure out stuff for them in the present. So we still have that layer which we will be revealing a little bit later. That said, we understand that this is the seventh game, so the story is becoming complicated. So we wanted to reintroduce some of the elements of the narrative in a different way."

Unity at once seems both new and familiar, a wealth of gameplay tweaks and additional features unable to entirely detract from the fact that this is the same core game we've been playing for years now. Still, *Black Flag* managed to surprise everyone by being fresh, new and the most enjoyable the franchise had been in years. It's not unreasonable to think that Ubisoft might be able to surprise us all once more, and *Unity* could become a true new start for the series to herald the journey into the next generation. While gamers' opinions on the franchise might be starting to sour ever so slightly, a new *Assassin's Creed* game is still guaranteed to sell millions of copies and the series has clearly not burned itself out just yet. Will a nice French holiday be just what we need to recharge our batteries and help things feel fresh again?

Sam Smith

ASSASSIN'S CREED: UNITY is sneaking around at Ubisoft Montreal. Check the website for more details: assassinscreed.ubi.com

WHAT YOU'RE SAYING...



I got sick of the AssCreed series during Brotherhood...Unity just looks like more of the same.. meh, not interested
@irgei



AC stealth only looks slick in the videos. I always find it clumsy in the final game. More so, I imagine, in co-op.
@Higgie_Baby



the French Revolution is, like, my favourite revolution. I've pre-ordered the Bastille Edition.
@SJHollis_



If its anywhere near as good as Black Flag was then this is a must buy!
Daniel Edward Burlinson

ETA 24 OCTOBER | DEV VISCERAL GAMES | PUB EA | TWITTER @BATTLEFIELD

Battlefield Hardline

The least subtle bank heist of all time?



ALSO COMING
TO PS3

VISCERAL GAMES IS a studio best known for the survival-horror *Dead Space* series, a largely single-player genre known for careful pacing, atmosphere and limiting the amount of weaponry and ammunition available to the player. Of course, critics of *Dead Space* might argue that the series has never done any of these things particularly well, but that detracts from the very apt point we are trying to make – that a developer known for survival-horror might not be the obvious choice to tackle the next entry in the *Battlefield* series, a franchise known for bombastic multiplayer action.

Of course, the new *Battlefield* game isn't exactly the same as what has come before. *Battlefield Hardline* is still a large-scale multiplayer shooter, yes, but rather than the modern military setting of the last few games, the focus is now on a cops-

and-robbers scenario, with a SWAT team facing off against a team of criminals attempting to carry out a huge bank heist.

"The core's always there, but the franchise has always been allowed to go in different directions in terms of style and tone and setting," says Karl Magnus Troedsson, group general manager for DICE and Visceral. "We started out in WW2, we went to Vietnam, we've been in a future sci-fi setting and modern military. We had *Bad Company*, which was a bit of sub-series, and *Hardline* is like that.

"What we had in *BF3* and *BF4* is a core that we think of as a bit of a sliding scale. We can create the biggest maps in a multiplayer game – with 64 players with jets, helicopters, jeeps, tanks and the whole thing – but we can also create the other side of the spectrum – close-quarters combat. So we've expanded the idea of what *Battlefield* can be and we see that as a strength of the franchise."

Describing *Hardline* as a close-quarters version of *Battlefield* doesn't seem particularly accurate either, as the first time we ever saw the game at E3 was a chase through a packed city, with multiple vehicles both on land and in the air getting involved as the criminals raced to get their stolen money to safety, with the cops never far behind. One member of the criminal team will always be carrying the bag which, amusingly, leaves a constant trail of money as the holder runs – surely nothing will be left by the end of the match! At one point, *Battlefield*'s acclaimed 'Levolution' (ugh) shows itself, a huge crane collapsing and taking down the buildings around it as the chaos intensifies. Not exactly close-quarters, right? Troedsson admits that these map-changing events will still play a big part in *Hardline*.

"When we think of *Battlefield* we think of it as a series of core pillars – the big open battles, strategy, team play, destruction, vehicles and infantry

"IT FELT RIGHT. IT FELT IN
LINE WITH WHAT A BATTLEFIELD
GAME COULD BE"





WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?



Live out those cops and robbers games you played as kids.



Battlefield 4's destructive *Revolution* system returns. More falling skyscrapers!



There's far more potential to carve out a decent single-player campaign.



The same emphasis on enormous, all-encompassing team-based combat.

warfare. Somewhere along those pillars sits the core of the IP. When we mix those elements together it becomes a sandbox you can go into and have a lot of fun.

"What we've done with that recipe is that we introduced destruction with the first *Bad Company*, we introduced the word that everyone loves – *Revolution* – and if you hate that word, by all means write 'large scale dynamic events'. Lots of people make jokes about it and now I've started doing that as well. But now it's stuck – it actually started out as a dev term internally."

Following on just a year after *Battlefield 4*, you'd be forgiven for thinking *Hardline* is a simple cash-grab, but Troedsson insists the game is a labour of love for both Visceral and *Battlefield* creator DICE, which is helping out with development.

"We do see *Battlefield* as an ever-expanding franchise portfolio, but when someone comes up with a great idea for a great game and they have a talented and passionate team that want to build it, we jump at it. This is basically what happened with *Battlefield Hardline*.

"When Steve Papoutsis, executive producer at Visceral and I met for the first time and the studio had said they wanted to make a *Battlefield* game, we started riffing on different ideas. The studio came back with the idea to create a cop thriller.

"Well, I've said that in other interviews that I grew up in the Seventies and a lot of us are from around that time. Crime fiction is still enormous; all of the TV that a lot of us consume is still about cops and criminals. So when Visceral said they want to make



Will *Hardline* signal the death of *Battlefield 4* multiplayer, a mere year after its launch?

a police and criminals *Battlefield*, we were absolutely on board. Not just because the series has moved in various directions before, but back in 2005/6 when *BF2* was out, there were ideas at DICE for a game just like this. There were even prototypes built for it. It didn't go anywhere because we didn't have a strong idea to pull it all together and we didn't have the team to develop it – the studio was working on other things at the time. So when Visceral showed up with their concept we were like, 'yes! Finally! Let's do this'. It felt right. It felt in line with what a *Battlefield* game could be."

Some gamers aren't pleased with EA turning *Battlefield* into what appears to be an annual

franchise, apparently in an effort to combat *Call Of Duty*. Troedsson reassures us that this isn't necessarily the case, and he isn't guaranteeing that we will see a new *Battlefield* every year.

"Well, I would say, it's not a business proposition we're considering at the moment, in terms of annualising the franchise. We can make great games as long as we believe we have the ideas for them and great teams to build them. We're not deciding to annualise *Battlefield* first and then retrofitting from there.

"But naturally there's a business part of what we're doing. We have to keep both sides in mind, but you lead with the creative and you lead with the

"IT'S EASY TO FORGET AMONG ALL THIS MULTIPLAYER TALK THAT HARDLINE WILL ALSO INCLUDE A SINGLE-PLAYER CAMPAIGN"



ΔOX All this chaos, just for a bag of money. Capitalism rules!



passion. If you make a game every year and you make it successful, that's great for the financial bottom line. But that presents a lot of challenges. For example, not all *Battlefield 4* players are going to be done with the game they own. They aren't going to automatically jump over to *Hardline*. The family of developers will keep supporting *Battlefield 4* when *Hardline* comes out."

It's easy to forget among all this multiplayer talk that *Hardline* will also include a single-player campaign. Players will control Nick Mendoza (he even *sounds* like a cop), a SWAT officer who is deeply embroiled in criminal activity. Taking inspiration from TV crime drama, Visceral is promising a "gritty story that will take you through so many twists and turns, you won't be able to wait until the next episode." Far be it from us to be cynical, but we've played the last couple of single-player *Battlefield* campaigns, and we wouldn't exactly describe them as particularly compelling experiences. Still, this is a new developer known primarily for single-player games, so perhaps this could be the first must-play *Battlefield* campaign.

Otherwise, *Hardline* seems to be *Battlefield* business as usual, with the same huge maps, tons

of drivable vehicles and the great gunplay that the series is known for, all dressed up in new clothing for the first time in quite a while. Steve Papoutsis, vice president of Visceral Games and executive producer on *Hardline*, is certain that the game can stand on its own two feet while still becoming an integral part of the franchise.

"From our perspective, this is a fully fledged *Battlefield* experience that the team is producing," Papoutsis eagerly tells us. "We're 100 per cent focused on making it the best game it can be. In terms of the broader franchise and what's going on there, Karl at DICE is overseeing the franchise as a whole and determining what happens next and where it's going."

Papoutsis is keen to reassure fans that his team is dedicated to making the best *Battlefield* experience possible. After *Battlefield 4* suffered from several bugs and crippling network issues over its first few months of release, fans may understandably have concerns over playing another *Battlefield* game at launch for fear of falling into another pit of latency, lag spikes and game-breaking bugs. Papoutsis is adamant that it will not happen again.



SHARE THIS



ΔΟΧ Come on guys, this is straight out of Heat...

TIMBER!

Welcome to the Revolution

The huge destructible elements in each *Battlefield* map are perfect for sharing, with a ton of potential for hilarious or badass results. Is anything funnier than almost making a successful getaway, only for a crane to fall on your face? We don't think so.

ΔΟΧ The single-player campaign in the last two *Battlefield* games was an afterthought. Will this time be any different?

"Going back to the beta, that was part of our strategy to show that we're taking this seriously and really putting an emphasis on the stability of the user experience. Hopefully, through the hard work the team is putting in players can see that and can create their own informed opinion about what we're doing. Ultimately, if you want to have fun in a really cool sandbox environment and want to live out the fantasies of being a cop or a robber, this is the game for you to check out."

Despite being the least realistic depiction of a heist we've ever seen, *Hardline* seems to be shaping up to be a worthwhile addition to the *Battlefield* series, taking the excellent core gameplay of *Battlefield 4* and dressing it up in new clothes. Will a new game a mere year later be too much, or will it be different enough to co-exist with its forerunner?

Sam Smith

BATTLEFIELD HARDLINE is being developed by Visceral Games. Check the website for more details:
www.battlefield.com

WHAT YOU'RE SAYING...

just looks like another Battlefield game, don't care
@rich111

I've always wanted a cops and robbers game so hopefully this will be better than Payday
@youare_g

after battlefield 4 sorry but im not falling for that again so many bugs and lag
@autsintree16

Visceral are developing? Interesting. Could we see an Isaac cameo?
@Bill_Rye88

So bored of FPS games. It's just the same as last years. Snore.
@Fio5



PREVIEW

FAR CRY 4

PS4



SHARE THIS



POACH THIS

My other car is an elephant

Although we haven't seen it yet, we've been promised that yes, you will indeed be able to RIDE AN ELEPHANT into battle in *Far Cry 4*. Driving into an outpost in a mounted jeep is so two years ago – now we plow into the poor

bastards on the back of bloody great beasts as their bodies get torn asunder and trampled underfoot. You are obviously going to want to share your bloody escapades – who can cause the most chaos?

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?



A beautiful new mountainous open world to explore and play with.



Another wonderful villain, as dangerous and unhinged as he is dapper and charming.



Awesome drop-in/out co-op play for the whole game!



YOU CAN RIDE BLOODY ELEPHANTS.

△×□ Pagan Min is clearly unhinged, more disturbed by getting blood on his shoes than he is stabbing to death one of his own soldiers. Dude needs taking down, but who's going to do it?

ETA 21 NOVEMBER

DEV UBISOFT MONTREAL

PUB UBISOFT

TWITTER @FARCRYGAME

Far Cry 4

Enter the mountains of madness



A HERO IS only as memorable as the villain he opposes. Would Batman be anywhere near as big a cultural icon without The Joker, Two-Face and others to fight against? In the case of *Far Cry 3*, the game and the player were the 'heroes', once again supported by a fantastic villain in Vaas. Don't get us wrong – *Far Cry 3* was an excellent game regardless, but the inclusion of a unique, well-written bad guy was what made it initially stand out.

Well, lightning has apparently struck twice, and *Far Cry 4* has come right out of the box with another fantastic, unhinged and extremely dangerous villain. Played by voice acting overlord Troy Baker, our bad guy this time is the dapper Pagan Min, self-styled overlord of the (fictional) Himalayan country Kyrat. Players control Ajay Ghale, returning to his home country to scatter his mother's ashes and finding it drastically changed in his absence. The opening demo we saw at E3 shows Ajay almost getting shot by overzealous guards before being rescued by Min, who seems to recognise and know our hero somehow. Still, despite offering Ajay a warm welcome – even taking a selfie with him – the guy is clearly extremely unhinged, stabbing a guard to death moments before for his mistaken shooting earlier.

Obviously, one thing will eventually lead to another and Ajay will find himself caught up in the civil war for his homeland, presumably opposing the tyrannical Min. It's neat to see Ubisoft subverting the 'white saviour' trope that many people lambasted *Far Cry 3* for – Ajay is a Kyrat native, rather than an American college kid who suddenly becomes a trained killer, while Min and his army are outsiders looking to take over Kyrat for their own ends.

The gameplay of *Far Cry 4* looks to build on its predecessor in small but significant ways while maintaining the excellent open-world sandbox the series is known for. Additions like firing a weapon while driving and a grappling hook to scale cliffs will ease your travel around the world, which is far more mountainous and vertical than before. As a result, the wingsuit will be featured more, as with increased verticality comes more opportunities than ever to fall off stuff.

The basic gameplay loop seems to be similar, with wild animals to hunt, enemy outposts to take down and story missions to tackle. However, Ubisoft has implemented one of the most requested features the series still lacks: proper co-op play. Yes, *Far Cry 3* had a separate co-op campaign, but the main game was strictly single-player only. Not so here, as a second player can drop in at any time and help

you kick some ass. While it doesn't sound like you'll be able to do the actual story missions, everything else will still be available for you and your buddy to take on, from assaulting outposts to just dicking around, jumping off of tall things and flying about. Simply playing around in *Far Cry 3* was enormous fun, and we can't wait to do it all over again with a friend by our side. PS Plus subscribers will even be able to send a trial version of the game to friends, allowing them to join you online even if they haven't purchased it.

Far Cry 4 has got plenty of updates and additions, but on the whole seems to be treading largely the same ground as the last game and, honestly, that's totally fine with us. *Far Cry 3* was one of the most enjoyable FPS games we've played in years, a brilliant open world merged with great shooting mechanics to create something effortlessly enjoyable. Even if *Far Cry 4* literally is just more of the same (but prettier, on PS4 of course), we'll be satisfied. We can't wait. Oh yeah, and did we mention you can ride elephants?

Sam Smith

FAR CRY 4 is being developed by Ubisoft Montreal. Check the website for more details:
far-cry.ubi.com

"A SECOND PLAYER CAN
DROP IN AT ANY TIME AND
HELP YOU KICK SOME ASS"





ETA 2015 | DEV FROM SOFTWARE | PUB SONY | TWITTER @BLOODBORNE_PS4

Bloodborne

Save our souls



IT'S NO SECRET that we here on **Play** love *Dark Souls*. It's one of our favourite games of the last generation, and we aren't alone in thinking as much. The *Souls* series has a huge following among hardcore gamers, and although *Dark Souls II* was excellent, the absence of regular director Hidetaka Miyazaki got fans wondering what he was up to.

Well, now we know. *Bloodborne* might have been officially revealed at E3, but we got a brief look at it beforehand, as some brief footage leaked of what was at the time known by its working title: *Project Beast*. A lone protagonist, walking through dark, hostile environments full of relentless monsters that want you dead – sound familiar?

So yeah, *Project Beast*, or *Bloodborne* as it is officially known, appears to be a spiritual successor to the *Souls* games, very similar but clearly different enough to warrant a new title. While the tone and setting seem to be a direct continuation of the

themes of the *Souls* games, the gameplay has been changed to promote a more aggressive, fast-paced style of play.

Not too much of course, as this is still an action-RPG, but one with some key differences to the *Souls* games. You'll no longer have a shield, so blocking enemy attacks is out of the question. Instead, your character has a weapon in both hands. In his right, a saw that can transform into a jagged cleaver, looking equally deadly in either form, and in his left a shotgun – yep, guns in a '*Souls*' game. It doesn't seem like you'll be doing any 'proper' ranged shooting, using it at close range in a style similar to *Devil May Cry*. With no shield, you'll be forced to dodge your enemies' attacks rather than sit behind a slab of metal, constantly staying on your toes and being more proactive in your approach to combat. It already sounds mentally exhausting.

Bloodborne is set in Yharnam, a huge gothic city clearly inspired by 19th Century English architecture,

and at times you could be walking around the slums of old London. The city is rumoured to contain the cure for a terrible disease that afflicts people at random, and over the years many travellers have made a pilgrimage there, seemingly never to return. Your character is one of these travellers, himself infected with the curse and seeking his salvation.

However, on arriving in Yharnam, it is clear that everything is not well. The entire city has been cursed by the plague, turning the inhabitants into mindless, bloodthirsty creatures that won't hesitate to tear you apart. Sounds like a pretty familiar setup, right? Still, there is a ton of mileage left in the 'lone warrior travelling through a cursed land' trope, and nobody does it better than Miyazaki and his team.

It also seems that Sony realises now the value in From Software and Miyazaki. While Sony published *Demon's Souls* in Japan, it neglected to do so in the West, leaving it up to Atlus in the States and Bandai Namco over here. In retrospect, it was a huge



"YOU'LL NO LONGER
HAVE A SHIELD, SO
BLOCKING ENEMY ATTACKS
IS OUT OF THE QUESTION"



△○×□ You might notice an overwhelming amount of darkness in the screenshots revealed so far. We don't anticipate a huge amount of happy daytime fun.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?



A spiritual successor to the *Souls* games? YES PLEASE.



Wield a huge scythe-saw and a shotgun at the same time.



Travel through an enormous, open-world city full of horrific monsters.



Even better news is that *Bloodborne* will be exclusive to PS4!

mistake, losing Sony a bunch of money and opening the series up to becoming multiplatform with *Dark Souls*. Still, the lesson has obviously been learned, as *Bloodborne* is a PS4 exclusive, a huge coup for the console that should fuel a decent number of sales.

Although we still think *Project Beast* is a cooler name than *Bloodborne*, everything else fills us with anticipation as we eagerly await the chance to once again immerse ourselves in a depressing world full of death, decay and failure. Living and dying over and over, gradually learning how to succeed. When we put it like that it doesn't sound much fun, but fans will understand. There is beauty to be found in utter despair, and nobody seems to understand that quite like From Software.

Sam Smith

BLOODBORNE is feeling glum over at From Software. Check the website for more details:
www.fromsoftware.jp/en

WHAT YOU'RE SAYING...

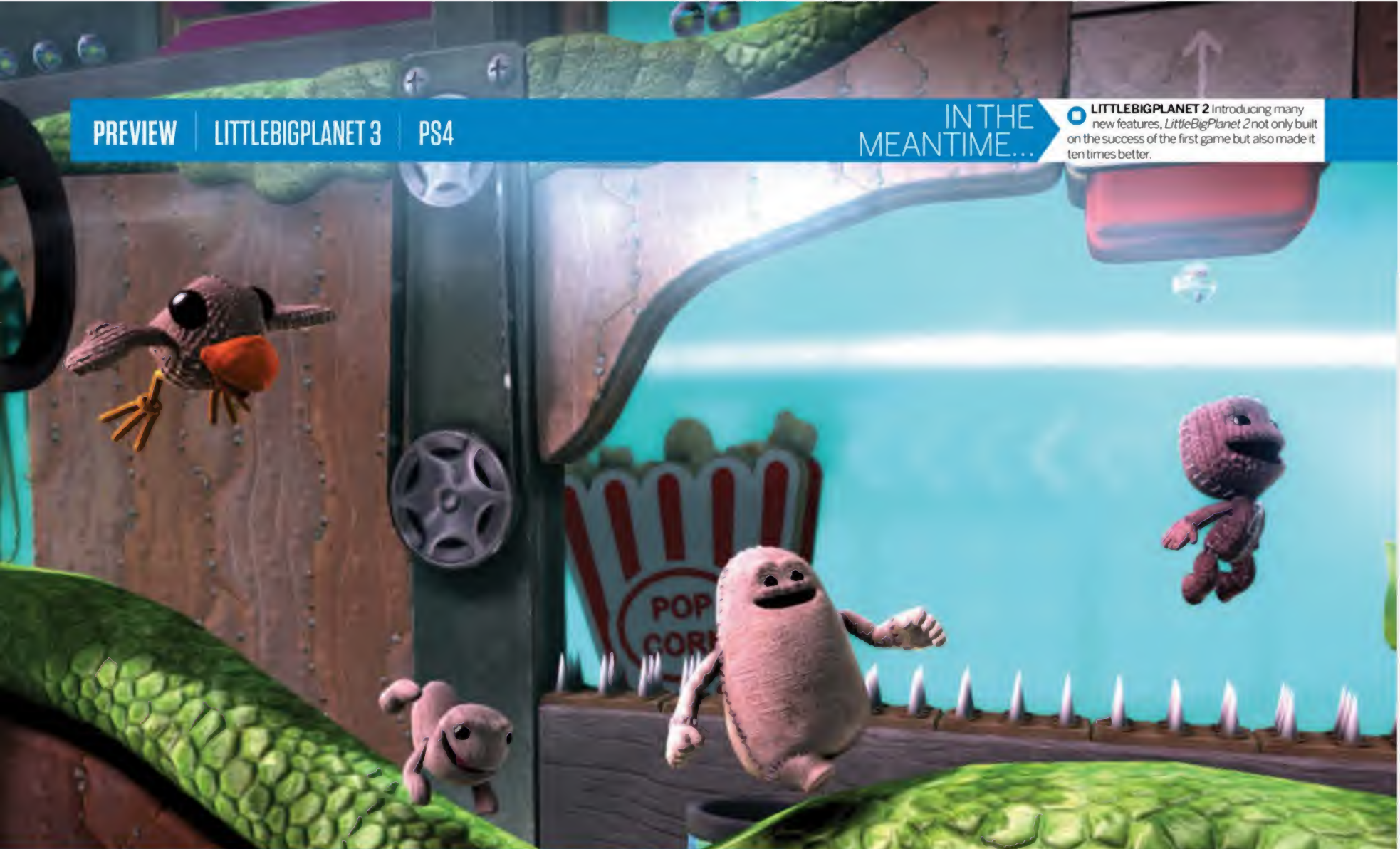
I'm about three times more excited then I was for Dark Souls 2. Give it to me now pls
@HeisaCHAR

I don't think it looks depressing enough lol
@robby66

scared to be hyped
@FiandRAWR

take that xbox owners haha
@bumparty





ETA NOVEMBER

DEV SUMO DIGITAL/XDEV

PUB SONY

TWITTER @LITTLEBIGPLANET

LittleBigPlanet 3

Living in a material world



ALSO COMING
TO PS3

THE THOUGHT OF your favourite videogame franchise being passed on to another developer is a daunting thing to contemplate. Like handing your newborn to a stranger, the ability to trust that they won't drop them on their head isn't quite there.

Thankfully both Sumo Digital and xDEV, the developers behind *LittleBigPlanet 3*, are no outsiders to the universe they're creating within, having each worked on projects in the series

"THE WORLDS MOST UNENTHUSIASTIC TRANSFORMER, NEGATIVITRON, WILL NO LONGER BE YOUR SWORN ENEMY"

before. With *LBP 2*'s Cross Controller pack and the Vita port under their respective hats, both studios have hands-on experience in Sackboy's world. However, with Media Molecule's previous instalments being so brilliantly crafted, you wouldn't be blamed for having some slight trepidation regarding the creative absence of

MM from *LBP 3*. For those of you worried that Sackboy is going to be forced into a first-person warzone, fear not – Sumo and xDEV only seem to be interested in building on the solid foundations of the franchise, not knocking them down and blindly resurrecting them.

Set in the new location of Bunkum, the world's most unenthusiastic Transformer, Negativitron, will no longer be your sworn enemy, with new foe Newton taking the antagonist role. Once again the story doesn't exactly sound entrancing, so don't be

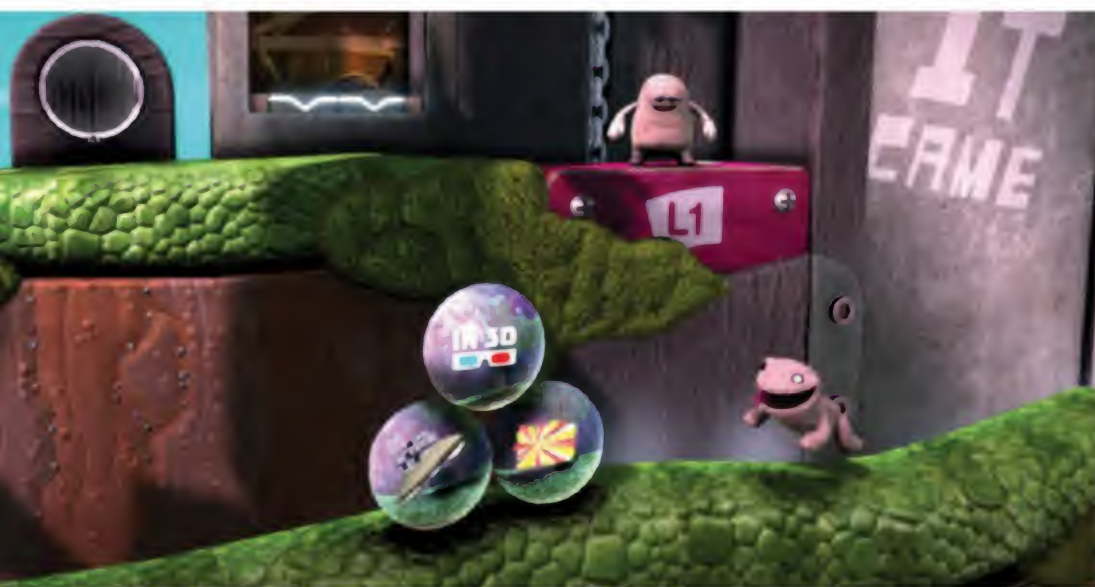
expecting a tale of epic Naughty Dog proportions but do be expecting some new friends to play with. No longer a loner, Sackboy will have three new playable characters joining him in *LBP 3*: Oddsock, a quick dog-like creature who has the ability to wall jump, Swoop, a flying character who can also grab others with her talons and last but definitely not least



△○×□ We're not sure about you, but we think this lot look pretty damn good in those get-ups.



△××□ The happiest bunch in all the land, you'll get the pleasure of meeting these cheeky beggars come November.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- △ Stephen Fry's silky tones telling you to do this and do that. Talk nerdy to us, Fry.
- Three additional characters open up more ways to play the game.
- × The increased field depth allows you even more creative space when making levels.
- User-generated content from the previous games will be available to play.



Toggle, a gormless sack who can switch between large and small forms. Of all the new additions, it's Toggle who looks both the most fun and useful to play as, his large version being able to weigh down platforms and lift heavy objects. As for tiny T, he will have the power to fit through small gaps and walk on water like a computerised midget Jesus, and you'll be able to switch from one to the other mid-game. Not wanting to leave Sackboy out, the developers have also given our main protagonist a new climbing ability, as well as some additional power-ups.

Each level in Adventure mode will be catered to these different characters, so for anyone thinking of choosing Swoop and gliding your way to the top of the leaderboards, think again. Equally, when in Create mode you will also be able to control which characters other players must use in your level. Speaking of Create, this has apparently been given the Hollywood face over-40 treatment and been redesigned. Nothing appears to be cut out, but new features have been added such as new tools and the ability to change characters' abilities. Not only do these fresh inclusions intrigue us but with extra field depth being added to the levels, we're also dying to see how many more hoops we can make our fellow players jump through.

Multiplayer-wise, the four-player online/offline co-op option will be back and for devoted fans of the series, you'll be happy to know that your past creations aren't being to be left to die. Any user-generated content from the first two games will be able to be accessed via *LBP 3*, however with the older games only having a maximum of three layers per level and *LBP 3* having much more, we're not yet sure as to how this will work. As for the graphics, everything look fluffier than ever at glorious 1080p. Every little texture and material effect really shines through thanks to this enhanced visual fidelity, in turn making each and every one of your hand-made creations that much more endearing.

No matter how this game plays, looks or feels though, there's really only one thing we care about in regards to *LittleBigPlanet*: Stephen Fry. A fine gentleman with the perfect voice for tutorials, if he's not back on narration duty we will be throwing a major shit fit. You've been warned, Sony.

Emma Quinlan

LITTLEBIGPLANET 3 is being crafted by Sumo Digital and xDEV. Check the website for more details:
littlebigplanet.playstation.com



“PERKS HELP YOUR CHARACTER BEHAVE DIFFERENTLY TO OTHERS OF THE SAME CLASS”

SECOND SCREEN

Customise from your mobile

GEAR

With a 3D model of your Guardian, you’re able to try on new gear and check out your current loadout directly from the app. Handy.

STATS

The stat-tracking in the companion app is amazing, recording not just overall totals but facts and figures from every game mode.

GRIMOIRE

Your collection of Grimoire cards is only ever a couple of taps away. Check out the ones you’ve earned, or check your progress.

MAP

Tired of having to visit certain areas to check the map? Just call it up on your phone. It even tells you when vendor inventories will refresh.





WIN! A LIMITED EDITION COPY OF DESTINY



Chances are, you're looking for something to do with your hands while they aren't playing *Destiny* for the next month. If that's the case, we have a proposition for you. Simply express your love for *Destiny* any way you like – drawing, music, photos, poetry, cosplay... whatever works for you – then send it to us and we'll pick a winner at launch and give them a special Limited Edition version of the game worth £80. Closing date is **9 September**, so send your entries to play@imagine-publishing.co.uk before then along with your contact details. Good luck!

ETA 9 SEPTEMBER

DEV BUNGIE

PUB ACTIVISION

TWITTER @BUNGIE

Destiny

The alpha was ace but the beta was better



ALSO COMING TO PS3

There's no point in beating about the bush, so we'll just go right ahead and say it – *Destiny* is incredible. After months of being teased with developer quotes about how the game would basically be the biggest ever made and those amazing gameplay videos, the ability to finally get our hands on the game was welcome. And while most betas tend to be somewhat rough around the edges, this early version of *Destiny* delivered a remarkably polished experience that felt better than a lot of finished games. It also answered a lot of questions we had about the game – particularly regarding the structure and flow of the action, as well as character progression – but at the same time, it also presented a hell of a lot more questions that we can't wait to have answered next month.

Chief among these is the issue of the level cap, which appears from a lot of the legendary gear

you can pick up in The Tower to be 20. Given how quickly we hit the beta cap of level 8, that does seem somewhat low but then again, *DC Universe's* similarly low cap didn't hurt it – it simply shifts the emphasis from grinding away on your way to capping out to peaking early and instead improving your character with increasingly impressive top-end gear. Even once you're at max level, you can still advance your character in other ways too. Experience can still be used to earn perks and skills that help your character feel and behave differently to others of the same class, plus you can choose to lock down a class build for a stat boost, preventing further progress but also enabling a second Focus (read: build) to be worked on instead. There's even talk of extra experience earned above and beyond the cap potentially turning into some kind of currency for additional gear, but we'll have to wait until release to see how this works.

It already looks amazing though, the lush 1080p visuals and steady frame rate combining to produce one of the best-looking sci-fi games we've ever seen. And what we've experienced so far is just the tip of the iceberg, too – main missions have been limited to the Old Russia setting on Earth, but we can't wait to fully explore the other areas of the galaxy teased by the multiplayer maps, such as the barren craters of the moon or the (somehow) lush vegetation of Venus. With *Destiny* promising a ten-year plan over which time the world will grow, we're a little bit scared – the game is every bit as good as we hoped, but we're not sure we'll have time to play anything else for the next decade. Uh-oh.

Luke Albigés

DESTINY is being developed by Bungie, the team that created *Halo*. Find out more for yourself at www.bungie.net

RISE FROM YOUR... TOMB

Last year's *Tomb Raider* reboot was one of the nicest surprises of the generation, an excellent update of a character and franchise that had grown slightly stale. Going back to the beginning and starting things fresh, the game followed a young Lara fresh out of university as she gets caught up on a tropical island full of bloodthirsty pirates and spookier, more supernatural threats. Lara thrives in the chaos, coming into her own as a deadly force as she fights to save her friends.

UNCHARTED TERRITORY

Tomb Raider took elements of the series that people had loved for years and blended them with more modern concepts, including a healthy dose of ideas from *Uncharted*. It might have leaned toward third-person shooter a bit much for some old-school fans, but the excellent characterisation of Lara, beautiful graphics and smooth gameplay made it one of the best games of 2013. And now we get a sequel! Hooray!

HIDDEN TALENTS

Our first look at *Rise Of The Tomb Raider* shows Lara in a therapy session, talking through what happened to her on that mysterious island. However, rather than being completely traumatised and scarred by her terrible experiences, Ms Croft appears to have found herself, finding enjoyment in the adventure, danger and yes, even the violence. Interesting what some people are capable of when the shit really hits the fan, hmmm?

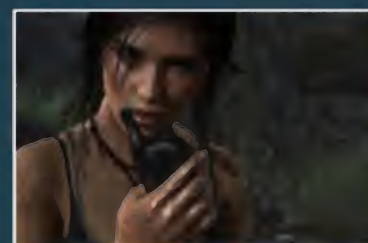
ALL-ACTION, ALL THE TIME

The trailer we saw at E3 was CG only, understandable seeing as the game is still a long ways off, and as such it's hard to assume too much about gameplay. Still, it's probably safe to say that more of the same will be the order of the day, but when the last one was so good, that's just fine with us. The trailer shows Lara fleeing from a wolf through a snowy forest, leaping over a chasm and catching herself on the other side with her trusty climbing pick. She proceeds to enter a mysterious cave before stealthily shooting a guard in the head with a bow and arrow. Girl's still got it.

CRYPT EXPLORER

The trailer ends with Lara slipping past the fallen guard and entering what appears to be an enormous ancient tomb, while saying she is becoming "what she was meant to be". This is notable as the first game, despite being called *Tomb Raider*, actually featured very little raiding of tombs, with a few short puzzle rooms thrown in out of necessity more than anything else. Considering the title of the game, this could be where we see Lara really start earning her name as the primary raider of ancient tombs in videogames today (sorry, Nate).

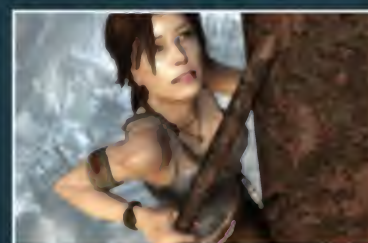
ARE REBOOTS LAZY?



It's a trend we see frequently today in games, television, films and more: starting again and putting a new spin on classic characters and stories. Even series that are barely starting to collect dust are fair game – the recent *Spider-Man* movies a recent example, following only a few years after the last trilogy of Spidey films.



Done well, reboots can be an excellent way of updating a classic franchise for a new age and audience, but done badly they can come off as a lazy get-out clause when the people in charge have run out of original ideas.



Luckily, in the case of *Tomb Raider*, a reboot seemed not only necessary but also the wisest move. The series had already gone through one soft reboot after the abysmal *Angel Of Darkness*, the final game made by original developer Core Design. Crystal Dynamics took over afterwards, not starting again completely but ignoring most of what came before.



After three decent games, the series seemed to be winding down again. Nobody expected another reboot to do the trick, but we were all happy to have been proved wrong. The new *Tomb Raider* was a proper reset, chucking out the old and starting the story again. By combining old series staples with new ideas, it was one of the best examples of a reboot done well.

Instant Expert

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Rise Of The Tomb Raider



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15 game-changing facts

DESTINY

Hands-on verdict

FIFA 15 EVOLVE

SUNSET OVERDRIVE

FORZA HORIZON 2

CRACKDOWN FABLE

LEGENDS THE DIVISION

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PLUS

SUNSET OVERDRIVE

THE EVIL WITHIN

WOLFENSTEIN

BELOW HELLRAID

THE WITCHER 3

THE MARCHES 2

ARKHAM KNIGHT

FREE DISC EVERY ISSUE

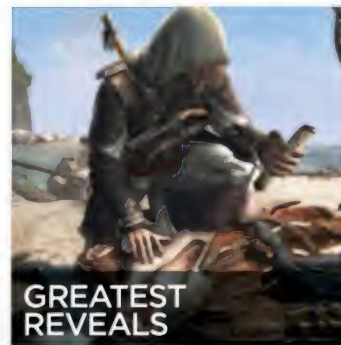
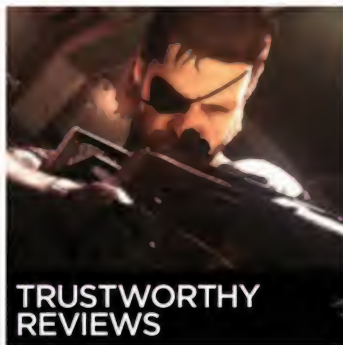
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△×□ We've only seen a few fatalities so far, but they are all equally as brutal as the ones from the last *Mortal Kombat*. What would our parents think?



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

▲ The return of one of the most famous fighting game series of all time.

□ Even more brutal fatalities than before. It's pretty gross.

× Set 25 years after the previous game, so a bunch of new characters.

○ Three fighting styles per character makes for a ton of options.

ETA 2015

DEV NETHERREALMSTUDIOS

PUB WARNERBROS

TWITTER @NETHERREALM

Mortal Kombat X

Blood for the blood god



IT MUST BE weird to work at NetherRealm. Where most companies have meetings about fiscal responsibility and business quarters (whatever that means), NetherRealm has meetings to brainstorm new ways to brutally eviscerate a fellow human being. You'd think, after some of the incredibly inventive murders in the last game, that it would finally be running out of ideas. Not so, judging from what we've seen of *Mortal Kombat X*.

Set 25 years after the last game, *Mortal Kombat X* is set to include a mixture of classic and new characters, such as Cassie Cage, the daughter of Johnny Cage and Sonya Blade. Seven characters have been revealed so far, three of which are fan favourites Scorpion, Raiden and Sub-Zero. The other four are new and introduce interesting new elements to the core *Mortal Kombat* gameplay. Our favourite so far is Ferra/Torr, actually two characters in one – Ferra is a tiny dwarf creature that rides on the back of Torr, a hulking brute with a burlap sack on his head who looks like he fell out of *Resident Evil 4*.

The little gameplay we've seen doesn't seem far removed from the last *Mortal Kombat* game, but such is the way with fighting games: you are far more likely to see gradual and subtle refinement rather than huge

changes for the sake of newness. That said, a few new features should keep things fresh and interesting.

One large addition is that each fighter can now choose from one of three fighting styles before the match begins. Scorpion, for example, can use the Ninjutsu style which revolves around swords; Hellfire, which involves special fire attacks; or Inferno, which allows him to summon a demonic minion. One of Ferra and Torr's styles is Pain and Gain, which has Ferra sit out entirely while Torr stabs himself at the start of the match, sending himself into a rage and drastically increasing his damage output. Having three different styles for each character essentially triples the overall cast in terms of gameplay, if not aesthetically.

The game will also carry over the environmental attacks introduced in *Injustice: Gods Among Us*, with the player able to use contextual moves depending on where they are in the stage, such as throwing something or leaping off the background to switch positions with your opponent. We hope the ridiculously over-the-top stage transitions make it back as well.

But yes, we know there is only one thing people really care about when it comes to *Mortal Kombat* and yes, don't worry – the fatalities are back, and from what we've seen they're even more insane than

before. One in particular that stands out is Scorpion's. First, the undead ninja throws a fireball through his opponent, exposing their still-beating heart. Then, in an entirely unnecessary move, he summons a sword and chops off the front of his foe's face, watching it slowly slide off their head as they crumple to the floor. Finally, the vanquished competitor's brain slides out of their now very open skull as they lie there, utterly destroyed. We've heard of overkill, but this is ridiculous.

People will no doubt again be outraged, but all it has ever done for *Mortal Kombat* is drum up more interest and, as a result, more sales. If ever there was a series that warrants the 18 rating, this is it, and if irresponsible parents let their children play it they have only themselves to blame. For the rest of us, *Mortal Kombat* is the same kind of guilty pleasure as a schlocky horror film – gore so over-the-top and crazy that it stops being disturbing and becomes almost amusing. Slated for next year, we can't wait to see what other revolting ways to destroy a human body the team at NetherRealm has come up with. Sick people.

Sam Smith

MORTAL KOMBAT X is being developed by NetherRealm. Check the website for more details:
www.mortalkombat.com

"THE VANQUISHED COMPETITOR'S
BRAIN SLIDES OUT OF THEIR
NOW VERY OPEN SKULL"



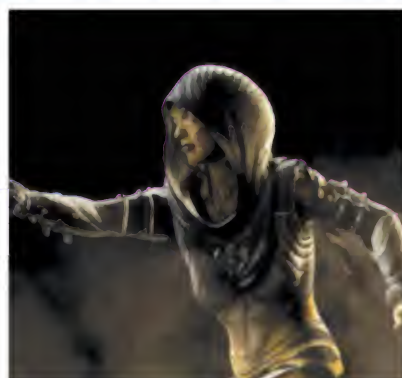
FINISH THEM!

Say hello to four new fighters



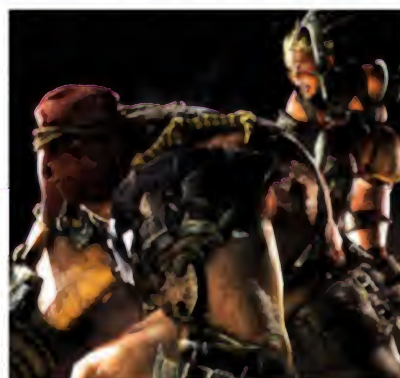
CASSIE CAGE

The daughter of Sonya Blade and Johnny Cage (never saw that coming), Cassie will fight using moves from both her parents.



D'VORAH

Half-insect D'Vorah can poison her enemies as well as tear them apart with swarms of flesh-eating insects.



FERRA/TORR

Our favourite so far, Ferra is a tiny creature who rides on the back of the hulking Torr. Torr can even throw Ferra as a projectile.



KOTAL KAHN

A descendent of villain Shao Khan, Kotal resembles an Aztec god and can summon totems to increase his strength.

ETA SEPTEMBER

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PES 2015

On its 20th anniversary, PES makes the leap to PS4



ALSO COMING
TO PS3

WE KEEP HEARING the promises – *PES 2013* is the point the series brings back the magic. No, wait, *PES 2014* is where that much-vaunted magic will return. Ah, correction – now it's *PES 2015* where that magic will, finally, return. Alright, so maybe that's harsh – the last couple of games have actually been on the right track, bringing the joy of *PES* back after it was lost in the PS3 generation. It's been imperfect, and a bumpy ride, but Konami has been showing that it pays attention to what matters to the players.

With *PES 2015*, the promise is being made again. But this time – *this time* – we're listening. Last year's game intentionally didn't make an appearance on PlayStation 4, so Konami could avoid the horror show that was the leap to the then-current gen last time around. As a result, *PES 2015* has had two

years to hone its talents, and the relatively new UK wing of Konami's *PES* team has had more than enough time to fix the niggling issues the series has picked up over the years.

Some time with the game shows the progress made, but it highlights a few concerns at the same time. While we were limited to Bayern Munich or Juventus (safe to assume the full game will have a *few more teams*), so it's not the full experience, there was more than enough to chew over.

The general experience is, well – it's football. It's still *PES*. It's what you've seen before, but refined and upgraded in several places. Shooting still feels exquisite – *PES 2015* makes people punch the air with joy after hitting a thunderbolt like only a *PES* game can do. Passing is crisp and accurate, aside from the odd 'this is early code, we'll fix it, promise' issue of non-reacting AI and the like. Tackling is

superb, though work needs to be done on referees actually reacting to things. It's updated. Upgraded. More *PES*.

Probably the biggest new change is in controlling your players, best shown with the 'jinking run'. A run where you jink, no less. This ties into the more responsive controls and more reactive players we've seen from *PES 2015* – by holding R2 you engage the run-o-jink, which allows you, among other things, to keep opposition players at arms length before beating them with a sudden burst of pace.

Last year's game felt, it's safe to say, rather lethargic. The jump to using the FOX engine made things look lovely, but it slowed down those all-important animation cycles. It isn't totally fixed, from what was played, but implementing elements like the running jink (is that what it's called?) shows Konami knows what needs to be fixed.

"IMPLEMENTING ELEMENTS LIKE THE JINKING RUN SHOWS KONAMI KNOWS WHAT NEEDS TO BE FIXED"





△×□ Manchester United fans must be loving these images – two of your best players you lost, both ending up at Juve. Sorry.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- △ The issues with last year's FOX engine implementation are almost gone.
- Shooting remains as spectacular as it has ever been.
- × Player models and atmosphere are both superb, and really add something to matches.
- It's once again become a viable alternative to the all-conquering FIFA.



SHARE THIS



BACK OF THE NET

The Share button was made for these moments

We're showing our age, but we remember when the ability to save replays was introduced to PES (back when it was *International Superstar Soccer*). It changed things. It made you want to be more spectacular with your goals.

PES 2015 has us just as excited as we were all those years ago for our memory card-saved replays, thanks to the existence of the Share button. Honestly, we're like kids again. It's time to start practicing your scorpion kicks, kids.

Speaking of things looking lovely, things look *even lovelier* this year. You can see how proud Konami is of the player models thanks to the handy screenshots littering these pages, and it looks just as nice in motion. Beyond the players and pitch there's been a lot more work done on crowds and atmosphere too – goals from the away side see fans with their heads in hands, rueing the day they allowed the opposition inside their sacred stadium to sully the game with their evil soccer-net-kicks.

There's a lot more to be seen of this Bold New PES – will the changes bring us back to the days of the great PES 6? Will the music offer more than just Nessun Dorma and some truly great/awful unknown pop tracks? And *will* manager mode still have as much pointless, get-in-the-way nonsense that adds about four hours to every session on the game as you hammer X to cut through it all? We really hope so. PES has been making huge strides in recent years – it's about time the former king took the crown back from its rather complacent rival.

Ian Dransfield

PES 2015 is being tapped up by Konami. Check the website for more details: pes.konami.com

THE EARLY YEARS

We first meet Goku as a young boy with a strange monkey tail, as he travels the land with teenage inventor Bulma searching for the mythical Dragon Balls, capable of granting any wish if someone gathers all seven together. These early adventures were inspired by the classical Chinese novel *Journey To The West*.

EVERYBODY WAS KUNG-FU FIGHTING

Goku grows up, gets married and has a son named Gohan – and this is where the fun really starts. Goku learns he is in fact one of the few remaining members of an alien race known as Saiyans, and is forced to defend the Earth from three of them. It's at this point that the anime transitions from *Dragon Ball* to *Dragon Ball Z*.

ANATOMY OF... GOKU

The series might have finished almost 20 years ago, but *Dragon Ball Z* is still a huge franchise and *Xenoverse* will mark the debut of the series on PS4. If you aren't familiar with it, let's explore the history of its hero, Goku

WHO NEEDS HAIRSPRAY?

Goku's adventures eventually take him to distant planets, and when battling evil alien dictator Frieza he unlocks a new power, becoming the first Super Saiyan in 1,000 years. This transformation causes Goku's hair to turn bright blonde and stand on end, as well as giving him an enormous surge of power.

THE LEGEND LIVES

Many more adventures follow for Goku and his family and friends, with our hero eventually attaining new Super Saiyan forms, each more powerful and sporting more ridiculous hair than the last. While the original *Dragon Ball* manga may have ended in 1995, the franchise is still immensely popular to this day.

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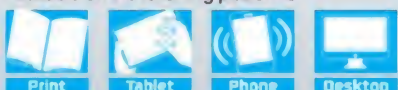


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PREVIEW ROUND-UP



WE LOVE FIGHTING games here at **Play** and it isn't really a secret, so forgive us for leading our round-up with a game that doesn't even have a European release date yet: **PERSONA 4 ARENA ULTIMAX**. You can always just import it (although the first *Persona 4 Arena* was the only PS3 game to ever be region-locked) but a UK release should be here soon. *BlazBlue: Chronophantasma*, another fighter from Arc System Works, released digitally on PS3 over here by surprise, only being announced a couple of days prior, so you never know when the game will hit.

Coming to the US next month, *Ultimax* adds a bunch of new characters to *Persona 4 Arena*, rounding out the cast to contain almost every main character from *Persona 3* and *4*. There is also another huge story mode in a visual novel style that will follow on from the last game, a treat for fans of the RPGs. Still, even if you don't care about the story, there's a lot to love here, with the rock-solid, lightning-fast fighting gameplay that Arc System Works is known for.



Speaking of great fighting games from Arc System Works that are coming out soon, here's **GUILTY GEAR XRD**! Is it the best-looking game we've ever seen? It's hard to comment on such a subjective criteria, but yes. Yes it is. This is cel-shading taken to the absolute peak; 3D graphics that look like a beautiful two-dimensional cartoon. We don't know what kind of perverse black magic the people at Arc have been experimenting with to get this to work, but we are happy they have. It's even more astounding in motion than it is in screenshots, so do yourself a favour and go watch a couple of trailers online. Again, it's coming out in the States soon with no word yet on a European release. We'd think it will follow shortly, but if not then this is an import for sure.

One game we won't need to import (because it's coming out everywhere at the same time) is **GRAND THEFT AUTO V** on PS4. Sure, millions of you have played it already, but let's not kid ourselves – this re-release will sell millions more. Many of us anticipated this, and some of you will have held off on *GTA V* the first time as a result – to you we say, smart going. Some of us (like ourselves) couldn't resist and played through the whole game on PS3 anyway, despite the fact we essentially knew that a PS4 version would follow. Still, we look forward to doing it all over again on a more powerful console, with better graphics, increased draw distance and more people and vehicles populating the city of Los Santos. It's coming later this year, and will hopefully include some



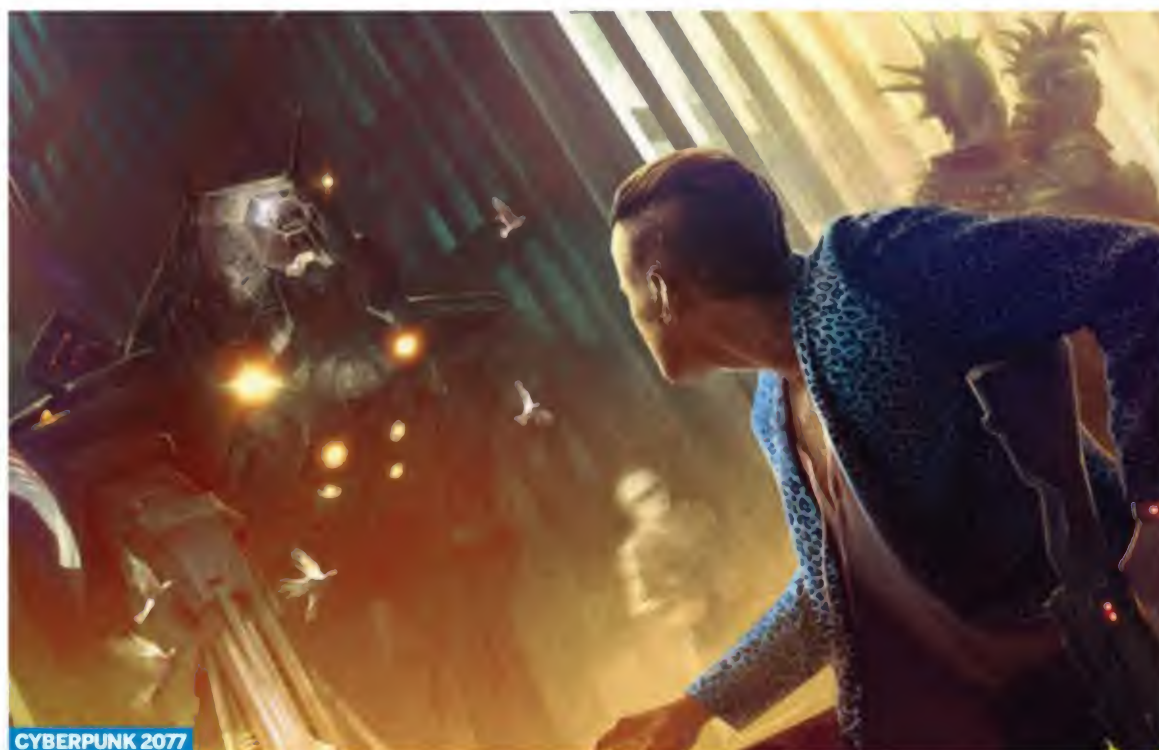


CYBERPUNK 2077

or all of the DLC that has released for the game since it first came out – is that too much to ask?

Finally, a game that we've been looking forward to ever since it was announced: **CYBERPUNK 2077**. CD Projekt RED is pretty busy at the moment putting the finishing touches on *The Witcher 3*. But once that huge RPG ships, the team has to get back to work on... another huge RPG. Set in the world of the tabletop role-playing game *Cyberpunk 2020*, the game is looking like an absolute treat for gamers who grew up with *Blade Runner*, *Akira* and similar films of the late Eighties and early Nineties.

Unlike *The Witcher*, you'll create your own character. But otherwise, *Cyberpunk* seems to be built on the same core principals that make *The Witcher* so good: incredible worlds, beautiful graphics, solid gameplay and mature storytelling. The chance to live out our *Blade Runner* fantasies in a game made by such a talented studio is a dream come true, and although it's clearly still a long way off, this is one of our most anticipated games.



CYBERPUNK 2077

"IT'S LOOKING LIKE AN ABSOLUTE TREAT FOR GAMERS WHO GREW UP WITH BLADE RUNNER AND AKIRA"



MIGHTY NO 9

KEIJI INAFUNE'S NEW 'not a *Mega Man* game but definitely a *Mega Man* game' game recently started a second crowd-funding campaign, half a year after making \$4 million on Kickstarter – over four times as much as originally asked for. This second campaign isn't because the developers at Comcept and Inti Creates ran out of money too soon – it's simply an opportunity for them to add *even more* content to what is already looking like a pretty stacked package.

If you haven't been keeping up with things, we'll fill you in. *Mighty No 9* is a spiritual successor to the classic *Mega Man* games from Keiji Inafune, the man who created the blue bomber in the first place. It's a side-scrolling action-platformer where you control a small blue robot who fights other, evil robots and

absorbs their powers and weapons once he defeats them. Sounds familiar, right?

Our hero this time is named Beck (no relation to the singer-songwriter) who, along with his robot sister Call (get it?) have to save the world after a virus corrupts every other robot, turning them against humanity. Beck can take on the forms of these foes once he defeats them, gaining abilities such as magnetic limbs to climb up walls or transforming into a tank to traverse spiked areas. It's a bit more of a change than simply getting a new gun each time, like *Mega Man* fans will be accustomed to.

Coming next year, *Mighty No 9* will be releasing on PS4, PS3 and Vita, hopefully with Cross-Buy to boot. With an animated series in the works, could this turn into a huge franchise?

AVAILABLE ON: PS4 RELEASE DATE: 2015



GRAND THEFT AUTO V



PS4 EVOLUTION

How your favourite games are better on PS4

RPGs

Dom Peppiatt finds out there's more to RPGs than just spiky hair and battles with God, and that PlayStation 4 promises to show us that fantasies don't have to be final...

Sometimes you just need to zone out of reality for a while – put real life on hold and give your consciousness a holiday. Whether it's to the mystical realms of Eorzea or to the galactic vistas of The Citadel, it's crucial for every gamer's self-care that they take the time to virtually jet off somewhere and settle into a whole new life, if only for a few hours at a time.

We're fortunate, with this new generation, that we don't have to put our brains through too much mental effort to enable our escapism – back in the Seventies, taking on the role of a caring crusader

or a crusty space pirate or something would've meant still actively applying ourselves: the mainframe computers of the time were only capable of generating text-based adventures like the original *D&D*, *Dungeon* or *Moria* – games whose central purpose was to task the player with making choices,

like the ever-popular *Fighting Fantasy* 'choose your own adventure' style books, but on a screen. With no visuals easing you into things, all the effort was still with the player – the RPG remained a niche in the West, until one game managed to get its Buster Sword slicing into people's imaginations...

Sony – having made the executive decision to go with the CD-ROM rather than the cartridge on the PSone – managed to win Squaresoft's attention from Nintendo, the developer reasoning that what it

wanted to do with *Final Fantasy VII* would never have worked on a cartridge. Here, the Final Fantasy/Sony relationship began, and Sony Entertainment America pumped an obscene amount of money into a three-month marketing campaign that plastered the game across screens and billboards all around America. It was the graphics – the FMVs and the timeless pre-rendered backgrounds – that Sony were selling, using Squaresoft's product to show off just how powerful the PlayStation was. Gamers unfamiliar with the RPG were drawn to the game, and realised that it wasn't just the visuals that made *FFVII* great – it was the combination of complex mechanics and masterful storytelling that came together to make a great package. With *VII*, RPGs hit the Western mainstream: they were here to stay.

This set a precedent with the genre – from then on, an almost polar split classified the role-playing game into one of two camps. Firstly, there's the Japanese RPG; a mathematical affair with saga-like storytelling, stat-dependent, turn-based combat and spiky haired heroes that – more often than not – would have a battle with God at the end. Then there's the Western RPG; typically action-orientated, with more of a focus on real-time combat, and less winding narratives. Both found tremendous success on the PS3 and recently, we've started to see the barriers between the Japanese and Western RPGs start to blur.

The PS3, though slow to start ticking over with RPG releases, continued Sony's trend of taking Japanese developed games and passing them onto a Western audience. The *Tales* series has seen three exclusive titles launch on the console, with another (*Tales Of Zestiria*) in development and due for release in 2015, and represents the purest form of JRPG-dom on Sony consoles – all the games operate similarly on the Linear Motion Battle system, with visible enemy

“THE TALES SERIES ENJOYS MASS POPULARITY IN JAPAN”

5 THINGS EVERY RPG NEEDS



CLASSES

Whether it's the ability to change the classes of your party, or individual characters that each perform a specific function, a class system needs to be in place somewhere.



TUTORIALS

With the potential for great power comes great responsibility. RPGs often have complex mechanics, and on your first playthrough, at least, it needs breaking down. If only just a little.



MINI-GAMES

Blitzball in *FFX*, racing Johnny in *Chrono Trigger*, monster hunting in *Dragon Quest VIII*, the iron chef in *Star Ocean II*... some of the best RPG moments have come from mini-games.



BOSS FIGHTS

What's the point in spending time grinding if you aren't going to encounter a boss that's almost impossible to defeat? Killing a boss is one of the most satisfying moments in gaming.



GOOD ART DIRECTION

If you're pumping 100+ hours into a game, you need to fall in love with its world. The graphics don't even have to be that great, really, but the world you're in just needs to have an identity.



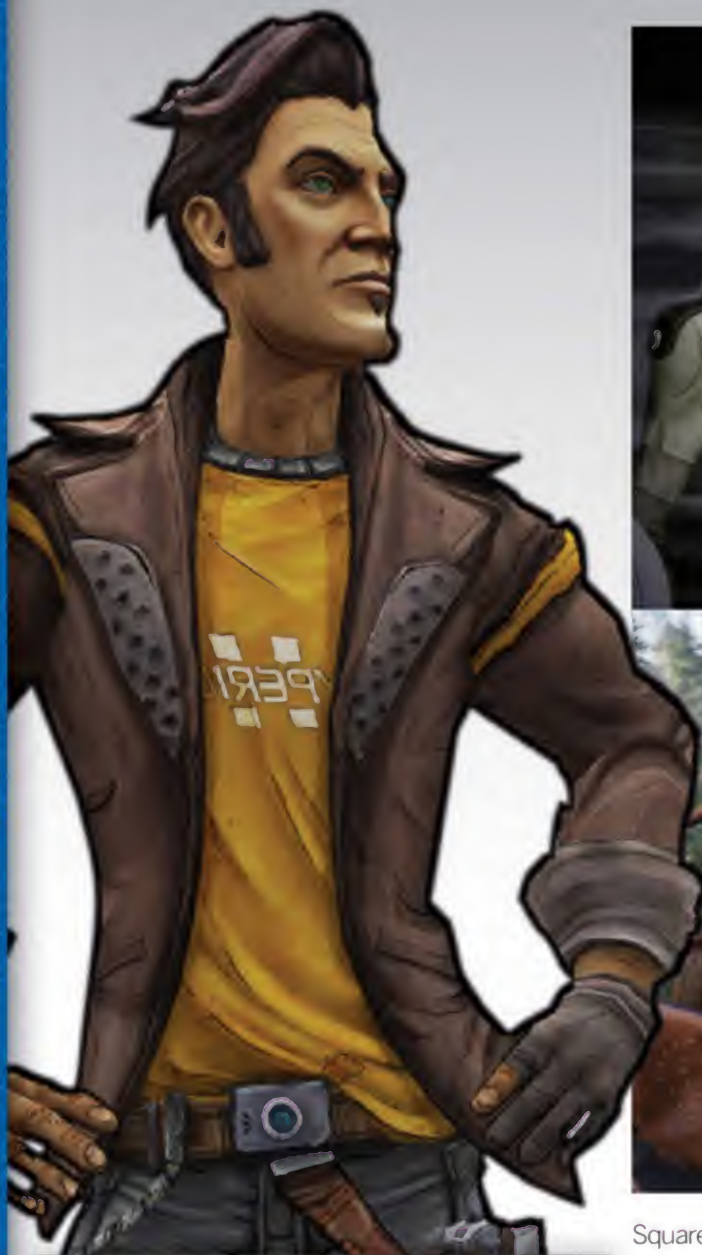
markers on the overworld map; making it more action-orientated than its *Final Fantasy* brethren.

While still considered niche on this side of the world, the *Tales* series enjoys mass popularity in Japan, and we're likely to see the franchise continue on the PS4, probably taking advantage of the console's huge memory reserves to make the fighting-game-esque battle systems more like *Ultra Street Fighter IV*; more technical and precise, relying on player skill, rather than stat progression and grinding. Alternatively, developers could take their games in a similar direction, but go a bit more hardcore – the beautiful *Ni No Kuni: Wrath Of The White Witch* fell somewhere between a *Tales* and *Dragon Quest* title, with traditional turn-based combat scratching the itch of console gamers that wanted something a bit more classical. When so many RPGs are looking to impress through experimentation, even the old can seem new.

If you look across to long-time RPG veteran Square Enix and chart its journey through the genre, you can see how the studio lets its output be dictated by the hardware it uses. *Final Fantasy XIII* was a notable sidestep for Square Enix and the *Final Fantasy* series, for example – being one of the most anticipated RPGs on the PS3, the focus on a more fluid battle system left many fans disillusioned. The battle mechanic was still satisfyingly complex, but it asked for far less involvement from the player than previous entries had, relying on an almost automated 'Paradigm System' that came across like a diluted version of *XII*'s 'Gambit' setups. *XIII* was neither an action-RPG nor a JRPG, falling somewhere awkwardly in the middle.

Final Fantasy XV looks set to remedy this. From gameplay teases we've seen,





GAME CHANGER: BORDERLANDS



The early life of the PS3 was weak for RPGs – aside from the tactical RPG masterclass that was *Disgaea 4: Absence Of Justice* and the early *Oblivion* port, not a lot was happening for RPGs until around 2010. But, in October 2009, Gearbox Software released one of the most critically and commercially acclaimed games of the generation: *Borderlands*. Fusing a unique cel-shaded art style with FPS gunplay and combat, then lacing it with RPG-inspired class systems, looting mechanics and storytelling, *Borderlands* quickly became the jack-of-all trades of the generation. It was an RPG to the core, yet it somehow operated perfectly as a cooperative experience, something that hadn't really been done outside of *Diablo* clones or MMOs. *Borderlands* is a prime example of how to fuse genres correctly, and we hope that – after the PS3's *Pre-Sequel* is released – we see a true, numbered sequel come to life on the PS4.



△×□ Forget Bound By Flame – *The Witcher 3* will show the world what a PS4 RPG can really do...

Square Enix has decided to focus more on the player-active battling than traditional, turn-based combat. Square is taking things in a promising direction though, with encounters looking a lot more involving than in *XIII* – reminiscent more of *Devil May Cry* than anything else (can you imagine dispatching a Behemoth, Dante-style? Amazing). The game also seems to have taken its cues from Bethesda's *Dishonored*, with the 'Blink' ability letting protagonist Noctis teleport around the battlefield at will, using an array of typically *Final Fantasy* swords to take down enemies. With the PS4's ability to

to see sci-fi and fantasy vistas unlike anything we've seen in games to date. Since the humble beginnings of the RPG, developers have focused more and more on making the protagonists we choose to play as more empathetic avatars, trying to get us to associate with them on a more human level. With Frostbite 3's facial animations and uncannily realistic graphics, BioWare has the potential to create even more emotional and engaging games than we saw with the *Mass Effect* trilogy on the PS3, with better cinematic value and even deeper immersion.

Project Morpheus and the VR movement poses an

interesting route for RPGs on the PS4, too; if RPGs kept to a menu-based battle system, exploration and navigation within Morpheus would be amazing – even for old

“EVEN RACING GAME THE CREW IS GOING TO HAVE SHAREABLE RPG OPTIONS”

output at 60fps and its higher RAM, we could see *Final Fantasy* take all the best bits of the series so far and revitalise them with a fresh, frenzied battle system that would be something truly innovative.

The PS4 also promises higher graphical fidelity for Western RPGs that make the most of visuals; with BioWare making use of DICE's stunning Frostbite engine to power both *Dragon Age: Inquisition* and the new *Mass Effect*, you can expect

PlayStation classics. We've already seen someone make the Generation II *Pokémon* games into Oculus Rift games; imagine if Sony did the same with *Final Fantasy Tactics* or *Grandia* – scoping out the field yourself, and then virtually commanding your allies to attack through VR. Upcoming releases like *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* haven't promised Morpheus support, but future iterations of the game could see an inclusion; walking around as Geralt and spotting

PS3 INSPIRATION



JOIN THE DARK SIDE

The popularity of the *Souls* franchise on PS3 shouldn't be undermined – though the games are largely action-orientated, the stat scaling and skill-leveling process is RPG in every way. Other franchises could learn much from the hardcore nature of the games.



MASS REGRET

Mass Effect 3 was so hyped, everyone we knew bought a copy. The hype suddenly died down after *that ending*, though. The lesson? Don't pull a Molyneux – don't offer what you can't live up to. If you have hundreds of choices through a game, give them all some closure.



2D OR NOT 2D?

2014 had a strong start for RPGs, with *South Park: The Stick of Truth* and *Child Of Light* both being released by Ubisoft. Both games showed there's still a huge market for 2D RPGs, and that even without the shiniest new 3D graphics, games like these can still be beautiful.



△○×□ *Final Fantasy XV* footage shown so far has been incredible. Here's hoping we see more at TGS.

mythical beasts for yourself over the crest of a hill would almost defy belief. It goes without saying that non-realistically rendered releases in the Morpheus would be mind-blowing, too; the idea of popping a midget's head off with a sniper in *Borderlands 3* just got whole lot more exciting.

It'll be interesting to see how the social features of the console are taken advantage of, too; games like *Mass Effect*, or even Bethesda's *Fallout*, operate on moral systems that make the player feel empowered – like they're the ones having an explicit impact on the world around them. Will hitting the 'Share' button on the PS4 instantly let your friends and followers know that you nuked that town, that you saved that puppy from the well, that you ate the souls of those villagers to attain even greater power? The long-rumoured *Fallout 4* might even have an option where you can see a friend's consequences in a village you've just discovered, if there's some kind of asynchronous multiplayer. The limitations previous RPGs have faced are melting away in the wake of the PS4's upgraded connectivity – even racing game *The Crew* is going to have shareable RPG options to pad out its single-player campaign.

This online prowess is visible in what we've seen in *Destiny* so far, too; critics have long maintained that the MMORPG will never really work on a console, but *Destiny* proves they can. With *Final Fantasy XIV* already

released to sustained popularity, *DayZ* and *H1Z1* on the horizon and the promise of more and more shared-world experiences to come, the PS4 may even take over as the home of the MMO this generation – the touchpad on the DS4 eliminates the age-old problem of cursors on pads, and PSN has already shown its support for both free-to-play and subscription-based models.

The science behind making an RPG is as complex and labyrinthine as the stories they often feature, and we're excited to see what developers can do on this new generation to really push the genre forward. RPG elements are creeping into every kind of game now, too; action-adventure games, racing games, fighting games and even platformers are all seeing facets of the RPG seep into their DNA. That could be because the PS3 saw the RPG evolve more in terms of mechanics and new ideas than arguably any other genre; back on the PS2, there was a lot of criticism that role-playing games (Japanese-developed titles, specifically) were stagnating, that there was nothing new that could be done with them – that the genre was all but dead. That was proved wrong in the PS3's era – the era of the FPS. With the capabilities of the PS4, and the momentum the RPG has gained over the last ten years, the PS4's lifespan could very well become the era of the RPG.

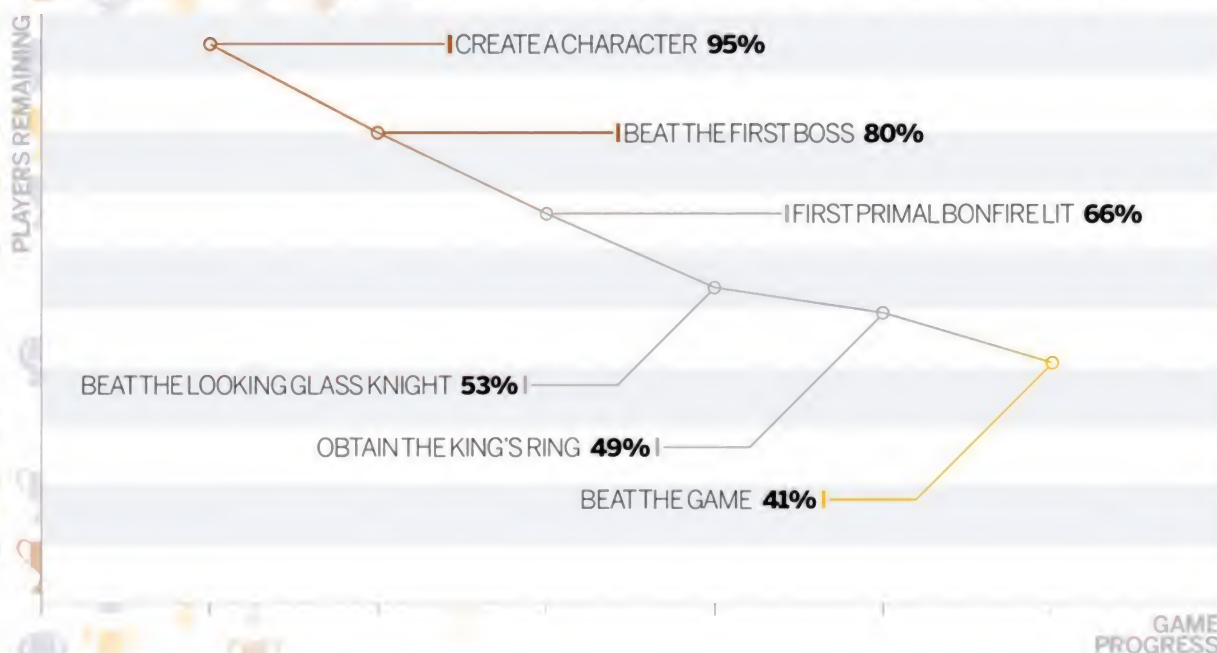


DATA MINING

A SELECTION OF INTERESTING THINGS WE LEARNED BY SIFTING THROUGH THE PLAYSTATION COMMUNITY'S TROPHY DATA

MOST DARK SOULS PLAYERS CAN TAKE A BEATING

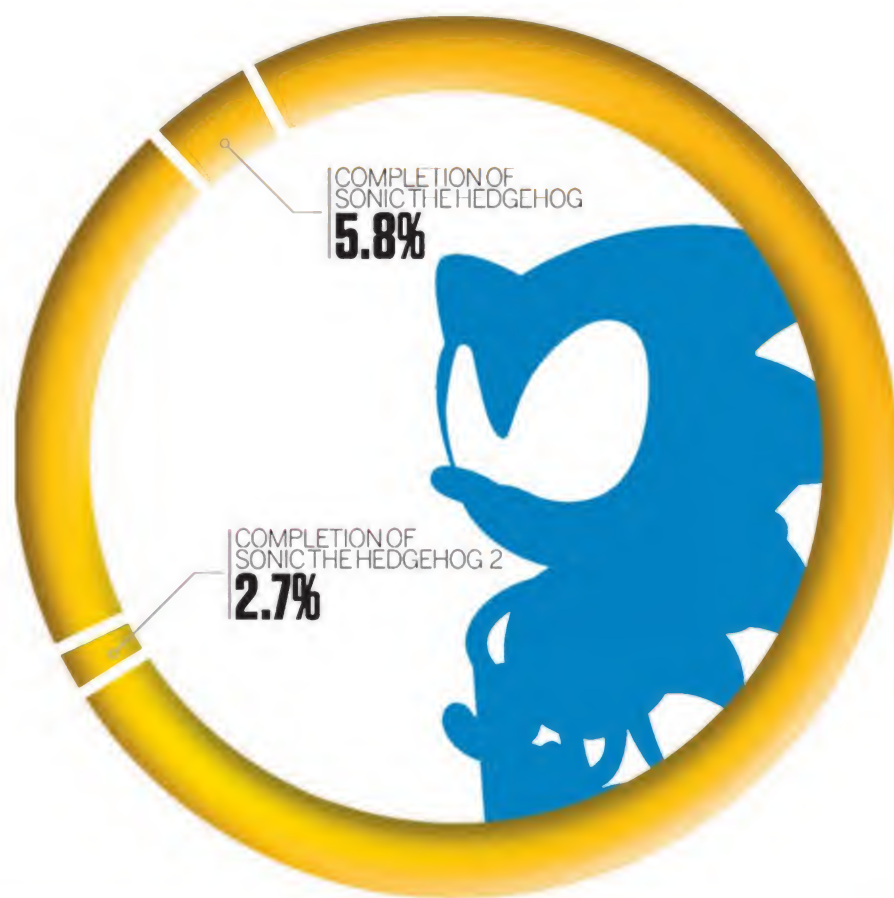
Using online Trophy info, we can track the exact point in the game at which people tapped out...



PLAYSTATION OWNERS ARE TERRIBLE DANCERS

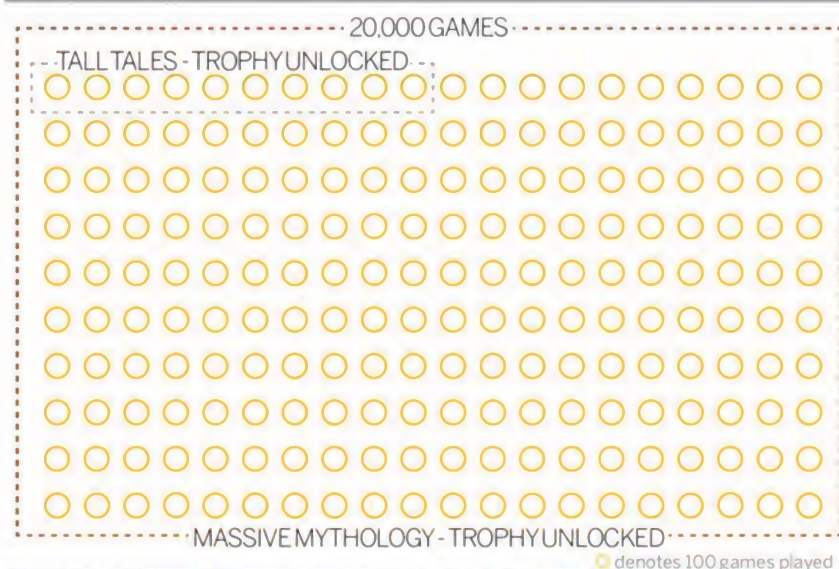
Yes, that's something of a broad generalisation. And no, *Just Dance 2014* probably isn't the most scientifically accurate way to measure mad moves. But either way, the Trophy stats for Ubisoft's dancing game are shockingly bad. Less than half of all players have managed to earn five stars on even a single song, with

a dismal 12.7 per cent managing to turn in five-star performances on five different songs. True masters are predictably rarer still, a sorry 0.1 per cent of players having aced the entire set list. A word of warning: if we see stats this appalling for *Amplitude* when it arrives early next year, we're going to go absolutely postal.



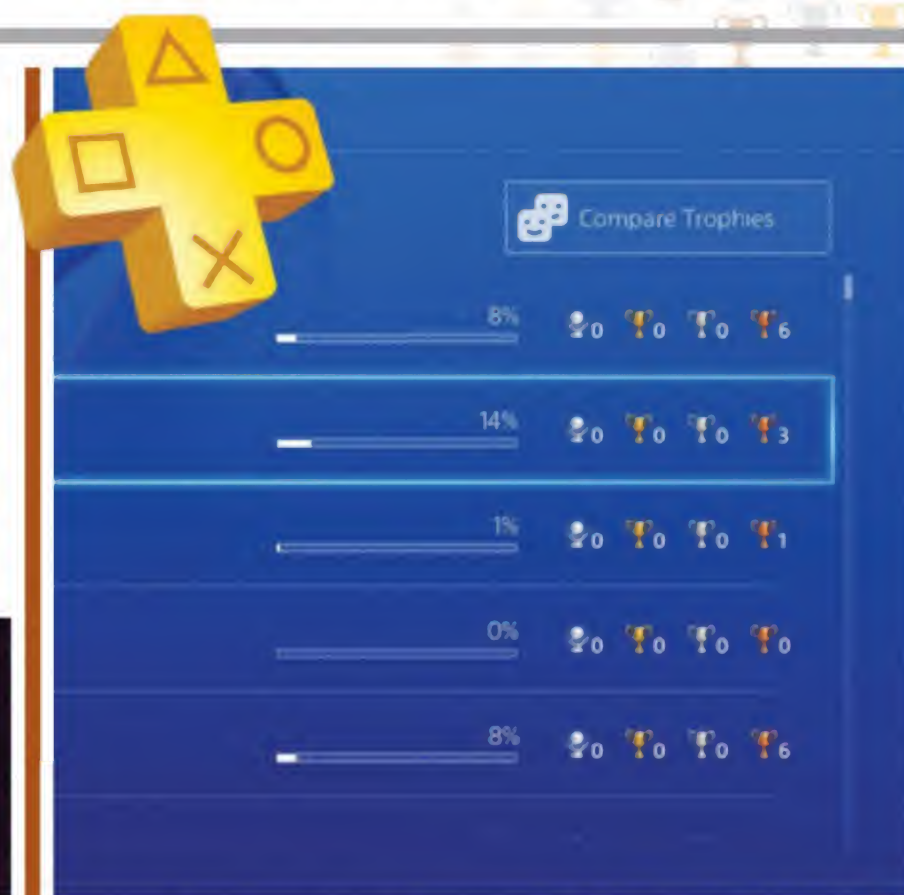
PATIENCE FOR RETRO GAMES IS AT AN ALL-TIME LOW

The PS3 was flooded with all kinds of old-school goodies but going over the stats for them has just made us miserable. Nostalgia might have fuelled plenty of sales but people clearly just don't have the passion or patience to see these classic games through any more. A mere 5.8 per cent of players have earned the Trophy for finishing *Sonic The Hedgehog* (which can be done in under 20 minutes) and less than half that have finished *Sonic 2*. Shameful.



EVERYONE SHOULD PLAY MORE TOWERFALL

There are precious few non-glitched Trophies that still haven't been unlocked by anybody, but *TowerFall Ascension* has two – despite the fact that this fast-paced arena battle is one of the best local multiplayer experiences on PS4, nobody has yet played the required 1,000 rounds to earn 'Tall Tales'. As such, we can assume that no-one is even close to 'Massive Mythology', which requires a whopping 20,000 rounds played. Each match is over in a matter of seconds but still, that's a lot of fights.

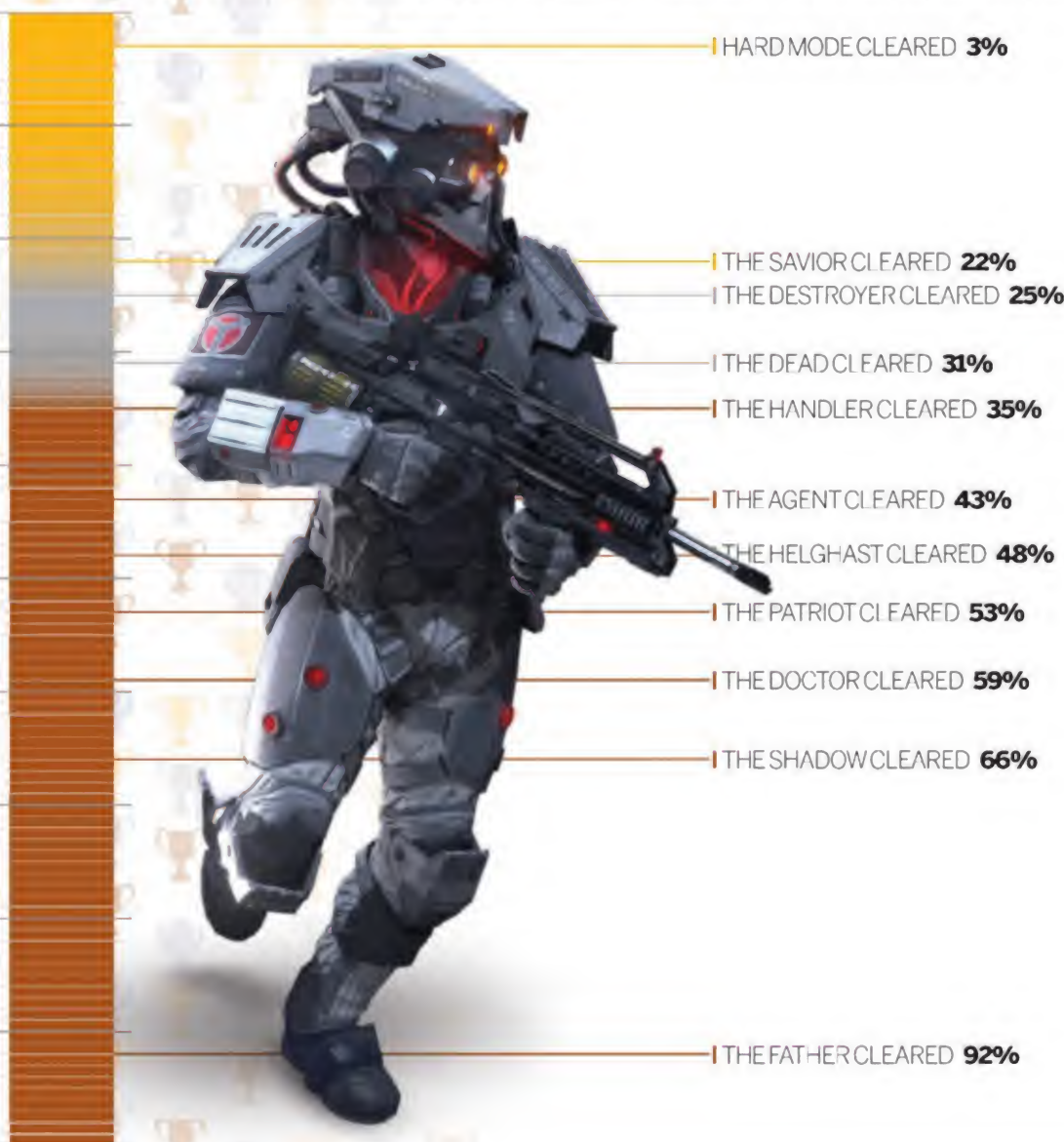


PS PLUS HAS RUINED OUR ATTENTION SPANS

When a game is offered for free on PlayStation Plus, there's no harm in downloading it, giving it a bash and just deleting it if it doesn't click. Sadly, this skews Trophy stats and produces some really odd results that make it look like large chunks of the player base are absolutely useless at games. *Shadow Of The Colossus HD* is a perfect example – only two-thirds of players have even beaten the first boss, while stats for that same accomplishment drop to just under half for *Demon's Souls*.

KILLZONE SHADOW FALL PLAYERS HAVE LITTLE PATIENCE

As with *Dark Souls II* (and any game with waypoint Trophies), we can easily see where players stopped...



R2 R2 L2 R2 R2 L2 L2 L2



FEZ OUTSMARTED THE MAJORITY OF YOU

We'd argue that there isn't a game on PlayStation that asks quite as much from players' brains as *Fez* – if you're playing it without a pen and paper on your lap, you're doing it wrong. Considering its tougher puzzles are so mentally demanding, we're surprised to see that only a quarter of players have spotted that 'Trophy Unlocked' has just a simple button code for a description and is only ever eight button presses away. How did you miss this, people?



SOME PLATINUMS ARE LITERALLY IMPOSSIBLE

You've probably seen your fair share of super-tough Platins – games like *NBA 2K14*, *Injustice* or the *Grand Theft Auto* titles that demand both skill and grinding – but it turns out that some are literally unobtainable. This can happen for a number of reasons, from server closures blocking online Trophies to daft glitches that prevent players from ever officially finishing a game. Here are some of our favourite mistakes...

DARKSIDERS 2

With the demise of THQ came the closure of its online servers. But wait, how does this affect a game that is single-player only? Well, one ill-advised Trophy is awarded for gifting an item to a friend, something that can no longer be done.

NASCAR14

We're not sure how this oversight ever slipped past the QA team but somehow, one of the Highlight challenges runs one lap longer than it should, making it impossible to even achieve Bronze in the event and locking out four Trophies in the process. A patch is apparently on the way.

NINJA GAIDEN SIGMA 2 PLUS

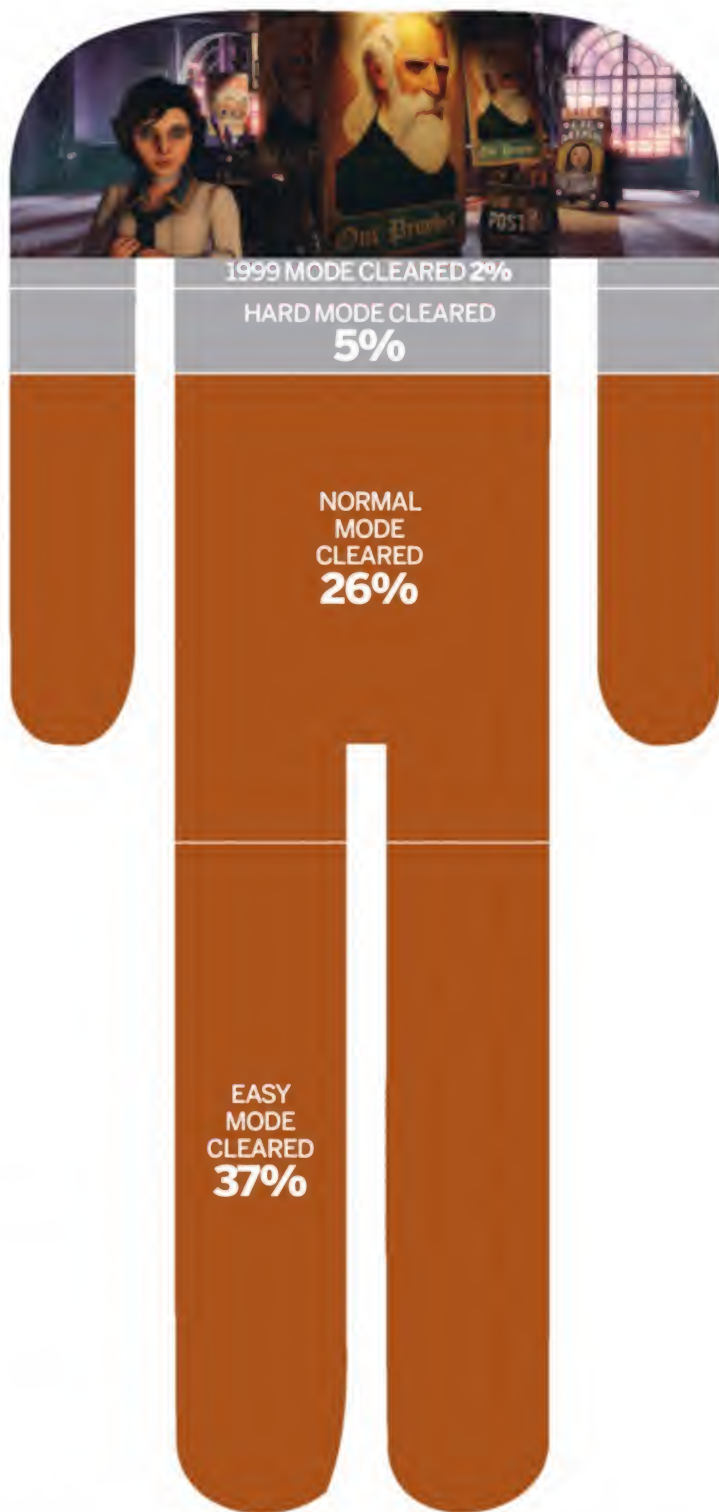
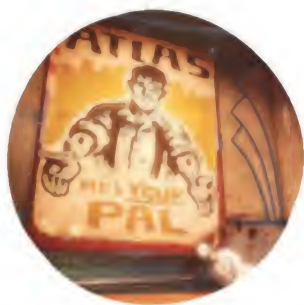
Tecmo Koei's hardcore action port might be a little too hardcore – there are two Trophies for clearing the co-op missions but with online modes unavailable, all that's left is to hope the awful AI partners will do something other than just die. They won't, and nobody will ever get this Platinum without cheating.

LOST PLANET 2

This divisive sequel looked like a serious Platinum grind at launch but now, it's genuinely impossible. One Trophy requires you to unlock every in-game title, which in turn means topping the global Challenge leaderboards which were hacked years ago and never reset.

MOTOGP 10/11

Winning a race against a full grid of human racers online doesn't sound too hard – the problem comes when you try to get an online race going and discover that the netcode can't actually handle this many players. Worse still, the previous year's game had the same issue.



OLD GAMES WERE TOO DIFFICULT

BioShock Infinite's 1999 Mode was something Ken Levine and his crew were eager to highlight in the run-up to the game's release, but it turns out that gamers weren't so taken with the retro-inspired hardcore mode as the studio itself. Just two per cent of registered players have clocked the game on this super-tough setting, where enemy damage and health are greatly increased and respawns are crazy expensive – if you don't have enough to pay the fee, it's straight back to the title screen for you. Which probably explains it, actually.



CONSOLE PLAYERS AREN'T REALLY INTO MMO PvP

Whether due to the fact that *Final Fantasy XIV* launched without PvP modes or simply that PS3 and PS4 owners would just rather invest their time in the main PvE activities, it still surprised us to learn that just 12 per cent of *FFXIV* players have earned the Trophy for simply participating in one PvP event. Granted, it's still pretty barebones and somewhat reliant on playing at considerable length to earn and enhance competitive gear but still, with the popularity of competitive online modes elsewhere, we assumed this would have been a bigger deal.



GROUND ZEROES WASN'T TOO SHORT AFTER ALL

You can call *Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes* a paid demo or complain about its length all you like – the truth is that one in three players still haven't finished the game's main mission. That's a staggeringly large portion of the player base (especially considering that speedrunners have aced the game in a matter of minutes) and while we fully endorse taking your time with the game and taking in all the sights, you should probably think about rescuing Chico and Paz before they die of old age.



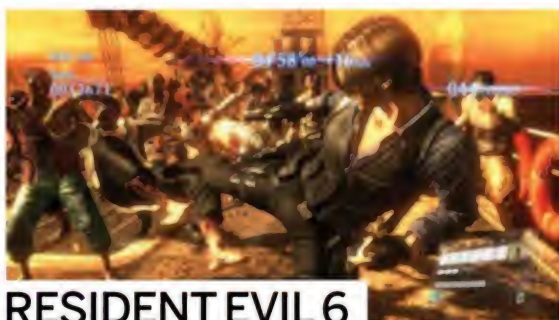
TOP TEN CO-OP GAMES

PLAYING GAMES WITH FRIENDS IS ALWAYS MORE FUN THAN BEING A BILLY NO-MATES, SO HERE ARE TEN OF OUR FAVOURITES WHEN WE FANCY SOME QUALITY GAMING TIME WITH OUR PALS. A QUICK NOTE: LEFT 4 DEAD WOULD OBVIOUSLY QUALIFY, BUT IT'S NEVER BEEN ON A SONY CONSOLE. SORT IT OUT, VALVE...



BORDERLANDS 2

WHAT'S BETTER THAN exploring a barren wasteland, shooting mutants and finding ever more ridiculous and powerful guns? Doing it with buddies, of course! *Borderlands* and its sequel both shine the most when played with friends, and up to four of you can team up together and kick some serious ass on Pandora. With four distinct character classes, you'll each have a specific role to play if you want to do well.



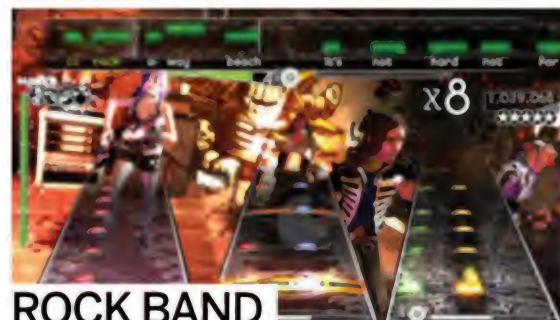
RESIDENT EVIL 6

PLAYED ALONE, RESIDENT *Evil 6* is a mediocre, slightly disappointing experience that doesn't much feel like the *Resi* games we used to love. Play with a friend, however, and the tone changes entirely, the game becoming a fun co-op shooter where the awful dialogue is suddenly hilarious and the plodding pace is helped by having a mate by your side making everything less tedious. This was a game built for co-op, and it shows.



MINECRAFT

MINECRAFT IS ONE of the true modern sandboxes, and dicking about with friends is always more fun than doing so alone. Whether you are building a tower that looks like a phallus, trying to survive the night against the terrifying monsters that lurk in the dark or digging down into the earth and seeing what you can find, it's all more fun with friends by your side. Of course, *Minecraft* is also one of the best single-player games around today.



ROCK BAND

ARGUABLY THE GREATEST co-op party game of all time, get some friends, some plastic instruments and a copy of *Rock Band* or *Guitar Hero* and you are guaranteed a good time. Some prefer to sing, some like to shred their toy guitar, others enjoy smashing the drums. There really is something for everyone, and although the genre and games are no longer supported, it's still our go-to choice when we've got friends over.



PORTAL 2

PORTAL 2 FEATURES an entirely original co-op campaign that features some ingenious ideas using the portal gun and other tools that would only work when two people are in play. Several people found the co-op story the most enjoyable part of *Portal 2*, and the single-player was no slouch. While it doesn't have a huge amount of replay value, if you and a friend have an evening spare then *Portal 2* is a perfect way to spend it.



DEAD ISLAND

THIS IS AN interesting one, as played alone, *Dead Island* is a buggy, slightly broken mess, and not much fun as a result. Played with friends however, *Dead Island* is a buggy, slightly broken mess – and a hilarious good time. Few better examples exist of a game that is truly made by co-op, and *Dead Island* shines when played with the full team of four, each character's abilities complementing the overall team dynamic.



TIMESPLITTERS 2

HALO MIGHT HAVE popularised the co-op FPS campaign for a large number of gamers, but PS2 owners had an excellent alternative: *TimeSplitters*. The sequel is where the franchise peaked, with a great campaign that still holds up today as a slice of old-school FPS fun. While the first *TimeSplitters* also supported co-op play through its campaign, the sequel takes our pick as the best of the bunch and a wonderful co-op game that still beats out a lot of FPS games released recently. With the recent troubles at Crytek UK (which used to be Free Radical), the odds of a fourth *TimeSplitters* are as slim as ever, but we'll always have this one.



LEGO

ANY OF THE Lego games really apply here, but our personal recommendation goes to the recent *Lego Marvel Super Heroes*, simply for the fact it lets you play as a tiny Lego version of Daredevil (the best superhero). Every Lego game is built around co-op play, to the extent that your character is never alone – if you are playing by yourself, you'll be accompanied by an AI partner. The relatively simple gameplay of the Lego titles is alleviated by having a friend with you on the journey, and the lack of consequences mean if you feel like being an arse and constantly killing your pals instead of making any progress, feel free!



STREETS OF RAGE

OF COURSE, CO-OP gaming is nothing new, and arcade beat-'em-ups from the Eighties and Nineties were built to be played with friends. One of our favourites is the Mega Drive classic *Streets Of Rage*, a perfect journey through neon-streaked alleyways and dingy bars as you beat the living tar out of hundreds of gang members. There are a bunch of ways to play *Streets Of Rage* on your PS3, from the excellent *Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection* to picking it up digitally on PSN. Other side-scrolling brawlers like *Golden Axe* or *Final Fight* are just as good if you fancy some old-school bad-guy-punching fun, too.



METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER

FEW OF US ever expected a *Metal Gear Solid* game to have great co-op play, but Hideo Kojima excels at playing with our expectations and proving us wrong. *Peace Walker* proved that the PSP could handle a proper *Metal Gear* game after the disappointing *Portable Ops*, and this was largely thanks to ditching the traditional mission structure and adopting one inspired by portable games like *Monster Hunter*: multiple short missions, all of which could be played cooperatively. Many missions practically required it, ramping up the challenge to near impossible levels if tackled solo. We'd absolutely love co-op to return in MGSV in some form. But is that perhaps a bit too much to ask?

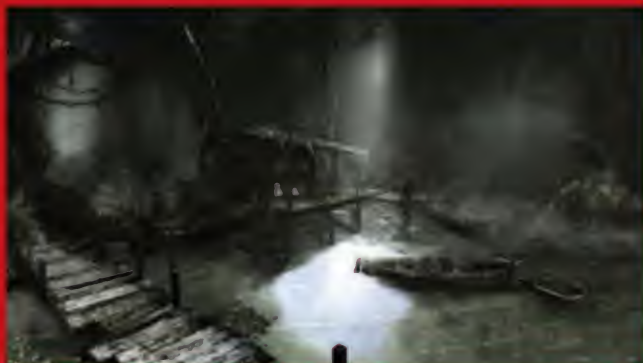
WHY DO GAMES FAIL?

ARE PUBLISHERS OR DEVELOPERS TO BLAME
WHEN A DARING NEW IP FALLS FLAT ON ITS FACE?
ED SMITH INVESTIGATES...





△×□ *Bulletstorm's* eclectic arsenal may not have helped its cause. Where was the standard issue AK-47?



The last hardware cycle was hard on games. A few core franchises scored big, and made explosive profit, but in the UK and US especially, people lost their jobs. Sony Liverpool. THQ. Kaos. Black Rock... that's only a partial list of casualties from the last console war. These weren't slow deaths either – a lot of studios didn't even see it coming. In the case of companies like Pandemic and Free Radical, all it took was one flop – one failed game after a string of hits – to bury the entire team.

How did it happen? How was it that during this ostensible gold-rush era, when one game could turn over a billion dollars in three days, so many sank and took their creators down with them? What makes a game fail?

"When people pay £40 for a game, nowadays they want £200 worth of game," says Adrian Chmielarz, creative director on 2011's *Bulletstorm*. "Our game was a £40 game sold for £40, but what you actually need is something that offers either 300 hours of gameplay or multiple games in one, like *Call Of Duty*, with its campaign, multiplayer and zombie modes.

"We were unhappy with the 1.5 million copies *Bulletstorm* sold, but if you look some of the great games that came after us, we did really well. That's sad. Triple-A died in 2010. AAA titles are the only ones that can survive now."

It's true that consumers expect a certain amount of 'content' in their games and in the

case of *Bulletstorm*, those expectations weren't met. However, the ambition to make a game big enough to satisfy all people of all tastes – to be AAA – can screw development as well.

Kingdoms Of Amalur failed because it was bursting with side-quests, characters and hours of playtime. It was too much work for 38 Studios to shoulder and both the game and the developer subsequently collapsed.

Games fail because they come up short of customer's expectations, but they also flop if developers try to achieve too much. Christopher Cross, lead designer on the single-player campaign of *Homefront*, says finding the balance is a difficult process.

"By the time I arrived at Kaos there was only a year to go and we hadn't finished any of the levels. To make time we had to throw entire asset sets out of the window. I think that had we gone for some of the systems that made the game feel better, we would have gotten more respect from the critics, and more sales. The original intention with *Homefront* was to have you feel fragile and vulnerable. It was meant to be a lot more resistance oriented. There were

FAMOUS FLOPS



ENSLAVED

Developed by Britain's own Ninja Theory, which would go on to make *DmC*, *Enslaved* struggled to entice consumers. It's a great game nevertheless, with cutscenes co-directed by Andy Serkis.



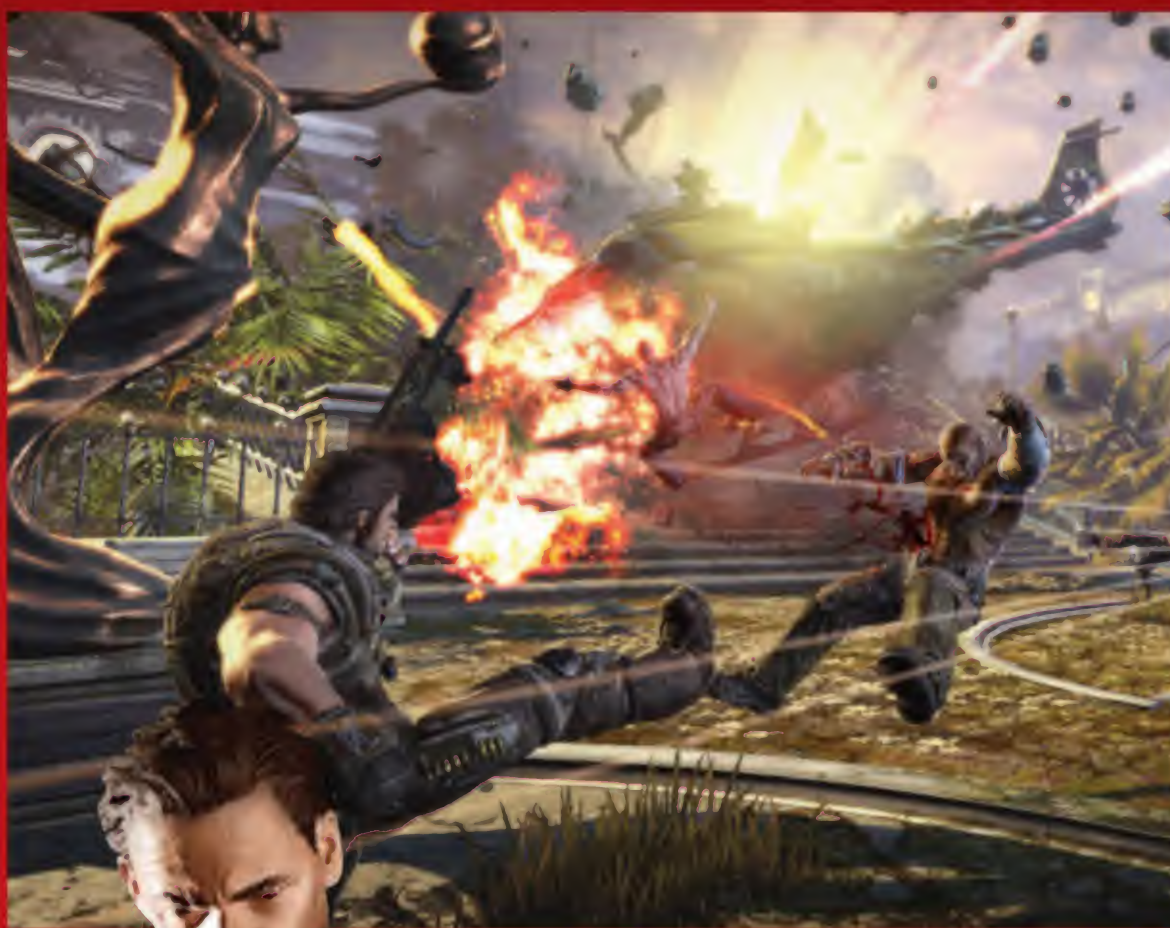
MAX PAYNE 3

"Lower than anticipated" is how Strauss Zelnick, CEO of Take-Two, described *Max Payne 3's* sales figures. It shipped a respectable 440,000 units in the US during its first week, but that wasn't enough. Even the mighty Rockstar isn't immune to failure.



DAIKATANA

The most famous flop of all, Ion Storm's sci-fi shooter fell behind after an almost finished version of the game was scrapped to be rebuilt in the *Quake II* engine. A poor ad campaign, helmed by marketer Mike Wilson, also didn't help.



△×□ Many didn't even pick up on the deeper messages of *Spec Ops* and *Haze*.



meant to be a lot more mechanics that would put restrictions on the player. But sticking with the scavenging oriented stuff would have meant a lot more difficulty ramping and teaching players. We had to really evaluate what to keep and what to lose."

It's a sad truth, but the fate of a game still depends largely on its commercial rather than creative appeal. Before deciding what to throw out, developers have to gauge what their fans

"WE HAD TO REALLY EVALUATE WHAT TO KEEP AND WHAT TO LOSE"

are looking for, and that can be tough. Some games fail because a developer dared to test the market. Take *Spec Ops: The Line* – an ostensibly straightforward squad-shooter, it challenged the idea that violence in war games is always acceptable. It flopped because people weren't ready to hear that what they were doing in *Call Of Duty* was wrong.

Likewise, *Mirror's Edge* failed because it was a first-person game with lots of platforming and little combat – it wasn't what was expected of the genre. There's a similar story behind *Max Payne 3*. It was difficult, it was slow, it was serious – it was nothing like the knockabout shoot-'em-ups that *Payne* fans were used to, so it pretty much died on the vine.

On the flipside, some games flop because they don't change things up enough. If *Mirror's Edge* and *Spec Ops* prove that experimentation can be dangerous, *Haze*, by Free Radical, is an example of how playing it safe can also kill a game.

"I think *Haze* received the hype that we had earned," says Steve Ellis, one of Free Radical's directors. "Up to that point, we'd only ever made high-rated games, so I don't think people were wrong to believe us when we described what

we were trying to achieve: it was ambitious, but they thought that we could do it. So, yes, there was definitely a backlash when the game was released. We all knew that we hadn't delivered on our promises. We were penalised for disappointing critics and not delivering what we had said."

But *Haze* and games like it don't fail because developers are simply unoriginal, or adverse to creativity. On the contrary – the teams behind those games are often working extra shifts in order to pick up the slack. If they fail, it isn't because of laziness. It's because pressures like time and budget damage morale, and force hard-working designers to kill their babies. On *Haze*, Ellis discovered this first hand. Crunching overtime to bring the game up to snuff started

MISSSED MOMENTS

Haze, Bulletstorm, Homefront – all pretty good games, all with a few choice moments that were sadly overlooked when they launched. Here's what you're missing...



HAZE – THE NECTAR

The soldiers in *Haze* are all muscle-headed stereotypes, but it's deliberate. Like *Spec Ops: The Line*, *Haze* is a satire on war shooters. The men are all on a drug called Nectar, which stops them from seeing the horrors of war. It's a take both on games, which sanitise violence, and the propaganda used to trick people into the army.



BULLETSTORM – BURN, BABY, BURN

One of the greatest gunfights in recent years, you find yourself locked in a nightclub, being attacked on all sides by *Bulletstorm*'s rampaging mutants. The kicker? *Disco Inferno* by Seventies group The Trammps is wailing from the speakers the whole time. It's violent, energetic and very funny.



HOMEFRONT – SUBURBAN WARFARE

At the climax of *Homefront*'s first level, you and your squad take cover inside a suburban house. But the occupants, a mother and her newborn baby, are still inside. The Koreans open fire and the ensuing gunfight is punctuated by the sound of the baby crying behind you. Dramatic, tense, loud – this is how shooters should be.

to affect the dev team, and the game suffered as a result.

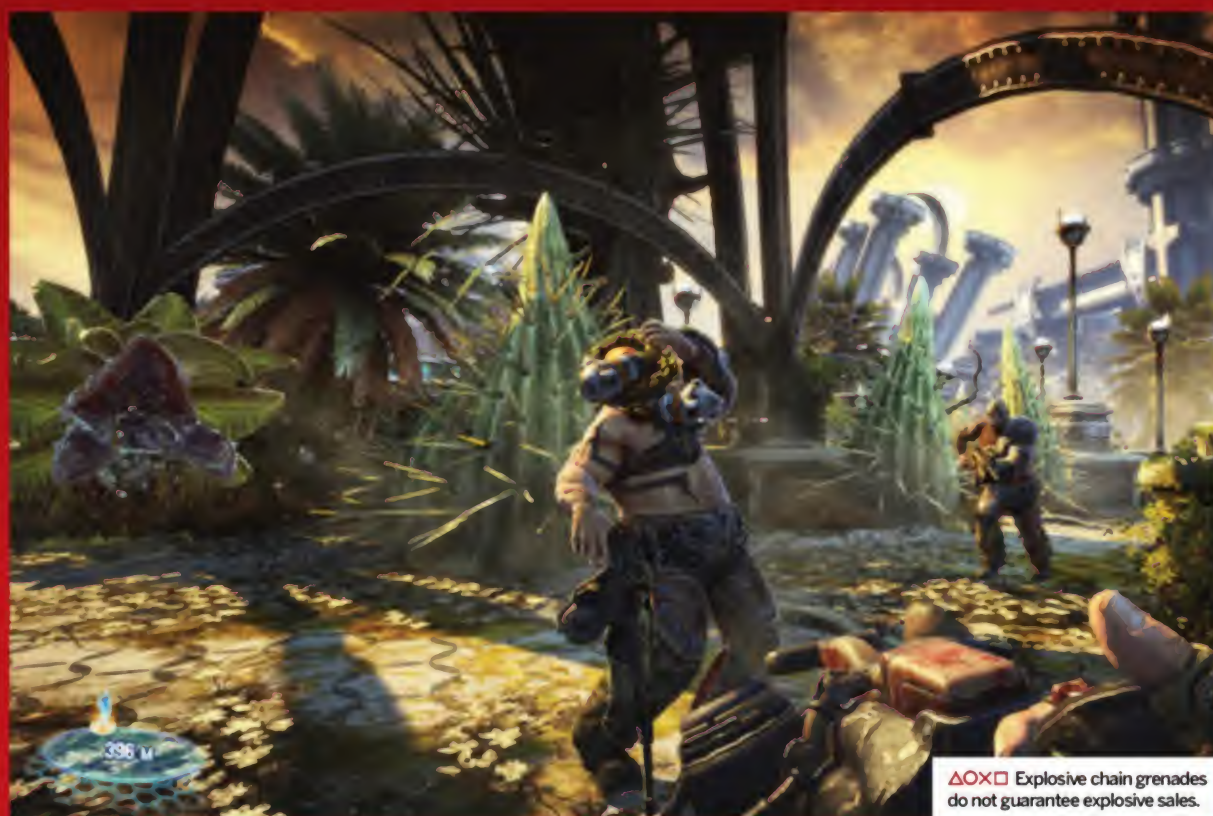
"There was morale crisis," Ellis says. "This was an extremely talented team being micro-managed and made to do things they didn't agree with. The worst thing was having to ask them to work weekends for months in a row. Most people worked hard to get through the difficult situation they were in, but some lost faith in the project. Others just left."

Bulletstorm and *Homefront* suffered because of time and money too. Chimelarz says that a tight deadline meant *Bulletstorm*'s multiplayer had to be farmed out to a third-party developer, something he believes was a "mistake". Likewise, Christopher Cross was forced to cut *Homefront* down to meet its March 2011 release date. Some levels were shortened and simplified. Others were thrown out entirely.

"There's a scene on a football field," explains Cross, "where you find a mass grave. I liked that. I wish we'd had more time to spend on it. I also liked the early, suburban levels. The stuff on the Golden Gate Bridge was exciting but too much like standard shooter fare. It would have been better to dig more into the Korean infrastructure, to do more raiding and logistical guerilla fighting. But, with the time allotted, we had to be blunt with what we portrayed. As deadlines creep up, you start to paint with a pretty broad brush."

Creative cowardice, or creative over-ambition, can make a game flop. So can uncompromising deadlines and tight budgets. *Duke Nukem Forever* failed because, after a decade in development hell, the final version was rushed together inside a year to capitalise on anticipation. By the same token, *Dead Island* was a cheap attempt to plunder *Dead Rising*'s





WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



STEVE ELLIS

A veteran of *GoldenEye*, *Perfect Dark* and *TimeSplitters*, Steve Ellis now co-manages CrashLab, a mobile developer based in Nottingham, the former home of Free Radical.

ADRIAN CHMIELARZ

After departing People Can Fly in 2012, Adrian Chmielarz co-founded The Astronauts, a studio based in Poland that is now developing its first title, *The Vanishing Of Ethan Carter*, for PC.



DEREK LITTLEWOOD

Through his company Eggbox Interactive, Derek Littlewood provides freelance consultancy to game developers as well as creating his own mobile titles.

CHRISTOPHER CROSS

Christopher Cross now works at Nexon America, developing online games. The company has also purchased a stake in Boss Key, the new studio from *Gears Of War* creator Cliff Bleszinski.

fanbase – there simply wasn't enough money to clean up bugs and straighten out mechanics.

Where do these pressures come from? Often the publisher. These guys make development happen: they tend to front all the capital and handle distribution. But because they invest so much, publishers expect a hefty and forthright return and they want to ensure that everything is running smoothly. Typically, that isn't a problem. Plenty of games are produced with massive involvement from the publisher, like *Assassin's Creed* and *Call Of Duty*, and turn out well. But like anyone involved in a game's production, publishers make mistakes, and sometimes it's those that make a game fail.

"I want to make it clear that it was fun working with EA guys," explains Chmielarz. "They really wanted the game to succeed and they worked very hard on it. But the direction they chose for the marketing was a mistake. I have no idea why they went with what they did. *Bulletstorm* was sold as a silly parody, a lowbrow comedy. Rough language and gallows humour were definitely a part of the game, but not the most important part. It was strange because they went with comedy for *Bad Company*, the original, and it didn't sell that well, then they dropped it for *Bad Company 2* and that sold way better. I don't understand why they thought to market *Bulletstorm* like they did. I blame myself for it as well, though. I should have chained myself to the radiator at EA's headquarters or something."

It's not as if publishers set out to make a game bad. Like basically anyone in the videogames



△×□ People often stick with what they know, making life instantly tough for any game that isn't COD or FIFA.



industry, they want to create something valuable that people will enjoy. However, the publisher's intentions don't always match the developer's. Like an overworked dev team, sweating to get a game straight and losing faith in the process, miscommunication between publisher and studio can severely affect development.

"I think it was related to the different cultures and attitudes at the two companies, but our relationship with Ubisoft wasn't as healthy as it could have been," says Derek Littlewood, creative director on *Haze*. "And having a breakdown between publisher and developer is about the worst thing that can happen, because it's the

when to stop. Games fail because there are so, so many people invested in them and satisfying all those different tastes is almost impossible. Between the hundreds of devs and distributors behind a Triple-A title, and the millions of fans waiting to be served, the pressure to deliver is overwhelming. There are bleating voices from every direction trying to sway how a videogame is developed and without confidence and vision, a game becomes either anodyne or overstuffed; too expensive or constantly delayed.

Perhaps that's an unsatisfying answer. Perhaps it would feel better if the failure of a game could be pinned on one negative influence – at

"I SHOULD HAVE CHAINED MYSELF TO THE RADIATOR AT EA'S HEADQUARTERS OR SOMETHING"

pivot about which the entire project – not just the development, but the marketing, scheduling and, crucially, the funding – turns."

It's important to see publishers merely as part of the problem. Games fail because of demanding investors. But they also fail because of developers who are creatively cowardly, developers who are too brazen and demanding consumers. In the cases of *Haze*, *Homefront*, *Bulletstorm*, and dozens of others, failure to launch came down to one simple thing: people.

Games fail because the people that play them demand the best. Games fail because developers either shy away from ambition or don't know

least then it would be easy to avoid.

But sadly, not publishers, developers or entitled buyers can be singularly blamed for a game flopping. Instead, it's a combination of mistakes on all fronts, from the design document to the marketing to the public's expectations, that buries a game, and often the studio that made it. Games are made by people, but so are the mistakes that kill them off.

Christopher Cross puts it best. "It's just the cost of doing business," he says. "If we'd had the time to stick to our original ideas, *Homefront* could have been successful. But that's not how it works. The best made plans, right?"



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"A HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY
IS MAINTAINED FROM
DRAMATIC OPENING TO
POLARISING ENDING"



△×□ Make every shot count or the tougher difficulties will kick all of your ass. ALL OF IT.

The Last Of Us Remastered

It can't be for nothing



DETAILS

PUBLISHER

Sony

DEVELOPER

Naughty Dog

PRICE

£44.99

PLAYERS

1-10

INSTALL SIZE

50 GB

AGE RATING

18

TWITTER

@Naughty_Dog

Trophies 50



IT'S DIFFICULT TO write more words about *The Last Of Us*, let alone say something new. What else can be said? Hopefully about 1,579 more words can be said, because that's what we've been contracted to do and our designer will shout if we give him screenshots without any words while mumbling "do something with these. Maybe make the headshot screen really big!" We don't know how to design things. We're idiots.

But we do know a good game when we see one and *The Last Of Us* is a brilliant, brilliant game. It quite rightly earned 94% in **Play** 233 and revisiting *The Last Of Us* (now in 1080p! Now at 60fps!) shows it quite rightly deserves 94% right here in **Play** 247.

It all starts with that dramatic opening. Plenty has already been written about Joel and Ellie and there's little more to add that hasn't already

been discussed but returning to *The Last Of Us* shows how the opening sets the tone for what's to come. Not only in terms of how its minimal, restrained gameplay explodes into carnage and chaos – one of the overlooked aspects of Naughty Dog's adventure is how it keeps changing up the gameplay scenarios to feel fresh and engaging throughout – but just in how serious and sombre it is. And that only works because the writing is so good.

At the time, perhaps we didn't have quite enough appreciation for how well written Joel and Ellie are as characters and as a duo. If anything, games since then such as *Watch Dogs*, *Thief* and several early looks at *Destiny* ("that wizard came from the moon") show how good the writing is in *The Last Of Us* because Naughty Dog gave us characters that act and talk like *actual human beings*, not avatars mindlessly reciting lines from a Red Bull-soaked

script that has been cobbled together via My First Script seminars. There are other great characters who drift in and out of the duo's journey across a post-apocalyptic US – grouchy Bill is our own favourite – and a high level of quality is maintained from dramatic opening to polarising ending.

And Ellie doesn't just stand out because she's well-written but because she joins *BioShock Infinite*'s Elizabeth as the only AI companion in recent times who actually enhances the adventure, rather than making you feel like a schoolteacher looking after a naughty child. She's a joy to play alongside – watching her scamper to the safety of cover in combat is reassuring because she never gets in the way and watching her poke and prod around the world when there's no danger enhances your own curiosity about *The Last Of Us*' expansive backstory and lore.



△○×□ Assisted climbing whiffs of *Uncharted*.



△○×□ Joel and Tess don't mess around...



△○×□ Each act has a distinct feel to it.

And what a gorgeous world it is to explore. Sony and Naughty Dog have been beating their chests about the improved resolution and the frame rate, the latter fixing one of the few flaws the original release had, but it's incredible the difference it makes. There are extra details you can pick out without having to strain your eyes – the dirt on Ellie's face, blood trickling down Joel's arms, cockroaches scurrying into dark corners

parody, overloading you with ammo and weapons so the only real challenge is rummaging through your arsenal and deciding what to gun down the bosses with. *The Last Of Us* goes the other way, making resources scarce and ensuring you never quite feel at ease with the amount of ammo, tools or weapons at your disposal.

It works. You'll cherish every bullet in your magazine and curse every

"EVEN FINDING THE LAST FEW DROPS OF ALCOHOL TO MAKE A MOLOTOV FEELS LIKE A MINOR TRIUMPH"

of the world as you approach. It feels like the PS4 is shining a torch on an extra level of detail the PS3 simply couldn't quite reach, and it looks stunning.

But ultimately, what pins all of these elements together is the combat, which is closer to a true survival-horror entry than games that proudly wear the genre badge have been. Look at series like *Resident Evil* and *Dead Space* – hurtling down the action route to the point of

missed shot, scouring every corner for resources with a mixture of desperation and hope. Finding anything – *anything at all* – feels like a triumph. Even something like finding the last few drops of alcohol needed to make a flaming molotov feels like a minor triumph. And when you happen to find the holy grail of resources, some actual ammo? You might as well have the *Final Fantasy* victory fanfare kick in.



△○×□ The city is, understandably, under quarantine when we jump into the main part of the story.





△OX□ There's an unprecedented amount of depth to the storytelling in *The Last Of Us*.



The scarcity of resources trickles down to affect how you play as well. *The Last Of Us* isn't about plugging enemies with gunfire until they stop advancing towards you. Against humans, it's about staying tucked behind cover, watching the flanks, working the angles and trying to land that precious headshot for an ammo-saving instant kill. Against the infected, it's about staying hidden, sticking to the shadows and trying to pick your way past them without making too much noise or shitting your pants with fear. There's a 'listen' mode which shows the outlines of any enemies making sound, working as a radar of sorts. Playing on Survivor difficulty kicks this crutch away, turning *The Last Of Us* into one of the most tense, horrifying experiences you'll ever have.

The Last Of Us Remastered also gives the multiplayer mode another chance to shine, as it was overlooked by most when the original launched. It's understandable why players didn't give it much of a chance as we tend to see more and more games add multiplayer for the sake of it – the likes of *Spec Ops: The Line*, *BioShock 2* and *Tomb Raider* have made the single-player-game-with-multiplayer-bolted-on



△OX□ For those who haven't played it before, expect plenty of brooding.

BEST & WORST AI COMPANIONS



ELLIE (THE LAST OF US)

Brilliant as a character, useful as a companion and there's one gameplay chapter starring her later towards the end that is spectacular.



CLAPTRAP (BORDERLANDS 2)

Although Claptrap doesn't provide any direct assistance and is defeated by stairs, he's great company. Oh, and you can high-five him.



DOGMEAT (FALLOUT 3)

Having your own personal attack dog is always fun but you'd have more success defeating enemies by flinging Pedigree Chum at them.



JACOB TAYLOR (MASS EFFECT 2)

Could be the blandest character in any game. Try describing him without saying anything about his physical appearance.



ELIZABETH (BIOSHOCK INFINITE)

Along with Ellie, Elizabeth is the gold standard for how AI companions should be made. Feels like a useful, living person.



ASHLEY (RESIDENT EVIL 4)

Brilliantly designed in that she always keeps up with you, but never gets in the way. Protecting her is a challenge but never annoying.



ELIKA (PRINCE OF PERSIA)

Indirectly ruined the balance of *Prince Of Persia* by making it far too easy, saving the Prince from death every time you missed a jump.



SHEVA (RESIDENT EVIL 5)

Unlike Ashley, Sheva was useless. She'd steal items from under your nose, nick ammo, constantly need saving and always get in your way.



△○×□ Character models have benefited greatly from the jump to more powerful hardware.



Hold [L2] To Aim. Then Press [R2] To Shoot



"THE TENSION FROM THE MAIN GAME SURVIVES ONLINE"



△○×□ Things like depth of field have been improved for PS4.



PS3 DIFFERENCES



ALL DLC

The *Left Behind* single-player chapter, Grounded difficulty and all multiplayer DLC is included.

TWEAKED CONTROLS

The control settings have been changed slightly although you can revert back to 'classic' PS3 controls.

LOCKED FRAMERATE

Although it now ticks along at 60fps most of the time, you can lock the frame rate to a rock-solid 30fps.

HEAR THAT?

Certain sounds, such as the click of your torch, will now come out of the PS4 controller.

exercise feel a bit tired and cynical. But the gameplay in *The Last Of Us* translates almost perfectly online, the slow-paced but electric Joel and Ellie versus humans combat of the main game working out just the same when it's two human teams going head-to-head.

The tension from the main game survives online, the nerves increasing as your numbers dwindle. Even when you have the likes of iSm0k3bLuNtZ charging towards the enemy team with typical online bravado, it remains an atmospheric affair. When he's inevitably gunned down in a blaze of shouty glory and you're the last person standing, or rather the last person *cowering* as you duck behind the counter in an abandoned supermarket and watch the opposing team approach with caution, it's really terrifying stuff.

Best of all, the multiplayer experience isn't like anything else on PlayStation. Xbox owners (boo, hiss, etc) get their



△×× The Last Of Us is pretty unflinching in its depiction of violence.



△×× Joel is a brilliantly written character, even while sleeping.

multiplayer cover-shooter scratch itched by *Gears Of War* and now PlayStation owners get *The Last Of Us* providing the same mix of blind-firing, flanking in the shadows and using teamwork to overpower the opposition. Ironically, it's only *Uncharted* – Naughty Dog's other big action-shooter series – that comes close to nailing that elusive formula and that doesn't come close to the multiplayer drama in *The Last Of Us*.

But you should know all this already. *The Last Of Us* wasn't a game that crept up on the gaming world and took it by surprise. It always exuded a confidence and class that placed it above the also-rans, which was justified when it finally hit the shelves to glowing praise from all corners of the industry. It now has all the multiplayer DLC and has the benefit of the various patches and tweaking on the PS3 version to ensure this version



TROPHY CABINET



MASTER OF UNLOCKING

Grab this on Easy difficulty and save your shivs for the doors – don't use them on clickers.



THAT'S ALL I GOT

When Ellie reads out jokes, prompt her to hear them all. There are five different locations in the game where she'll do this.

is balanced, fair and has a few extras that weren't present at launch. It now packs the *Left Behind* expansion, which visits Ellie's backstory, twists familiar combat scenarios into something new and maintains the high level of quality that the main game had. It now has the Grounded difficulty mode, which is borderline sadistic in how it relentlessly crushes your spirit to dust. It now ticks along at a stable frame rate, addressing one of the few criticisms of the PS3 original. It now has audio recordings and the flashlight click coming from the controller itself. But most of all, even after all this discussion and those months since its PS3 release, *The Last Of Us* still stands tall as a powerful, gripping experience.

If you've somehow avoided *The Last Of Us* until now, then congratulations. You get to enjoy the best version of one

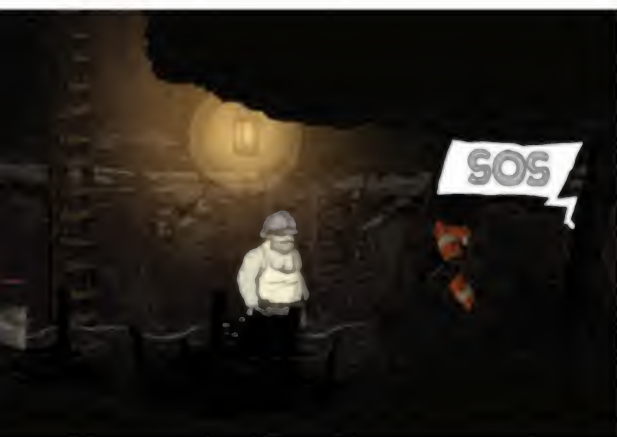
of the best PlayStation games ever made completely fresh. If you've already completed *The Last Of Us*, it's well worth revisiting for the extra content, to tackle the adventure on the tougher difficulties and to see how glorious the whole journey looks when powered by PlayStation 4. We started this review by asking what else can be said. Perhaps the real question should be – what else *needs* to be said? Absolutely essential.

Ryan King

VERDICT

It's the best version available of what is arguably PlayStation 3's best game and *The Last Of Us* remains every bit as dramatic, powerful and engaging as it was when first released. Still incredible.

94%



△×□ For the love of God, turn off the Trophy announcements before you start playing. There are spoilers, and not subtle ones either.



Valiant Hearts: The Great War

The hell where youth and laughter go



WE SPENT A good long while trying to figure out what was making us

uneasy about Ubisoft's heartfelt and well-meaning tribute to the tragic loss and human suffering of World War One. And then it hit us: it's just not funny enough.

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Ubisoft

DEVELOPER
Ubisoft Montpellier

PSN PRICE
£11.99

PLAYERS
1

INSTALL SIZE
1.3 GB

AGE RATING
12+

TWITTER
@vhgame

Trophies 20



Before you accuse us of being stone cold bastards, don't get us wrong: it's not serious enough, either. The story of four individuals in World War One and their criss-crossing lives, what *Valiant Hearts* does is try to balance on that ridiculously thin line between being a fun game and being a meaningful one. We've got games like *The Last Of Us*, masterfully working a poignant story into some awesome gameplay, and games like *Papo & Yo*, tackling difficult subjects through light-hearted presentation. What games aren't so good at is combining the two in equal measure. Considering the sensitive subject matter of war, death, love

and loss, it would take a masterful touch to do it justice. It can definitely be done; something like *Blackadder Goes Forth* does it almost perfectly. But *Valiant Hearts* feels like it should have gone full slapstick and created a fictional war to play with (with an appropriately bombastic villain), or stuck to highlighting the brutality of war in the interactive way only games can.

For the most part, *Valiant Hearts* keeps its 2D platformer style, with lots of fetch quests and puzzles, many of which are based around what your doggy companion can fetch for you. A lot of these puzzles are great, drawing on classic Nineties point-and-click games like *Discworld* and *Broken Sword*. Unfortunately, while those games reveled in the often-nonsensical process of 'give milk to cat, get scissors somehow, give scissors to dressmaker, get bees, wander around until you find someone that inexplicably wants bees,' here it really detracts from the urgency of the situation. Music will often swell dramatically as a tense situation presents itself, only to die down again as you wander around looking for something you can pick up and use. Too many times we picked up an item only to walk into the next room and simply hand it over as it was needed, and too many times we could see items in the background that would have been much more useful, but can't be picked up. It's a classic flaw of point-and-click puzzle games, and while the puzzles themselves aren't bad, the pace of them is weirdly mismatched with the setting.

Despite this inevitably uneven pace, there are still sections where *Valiant Hearts* approaches brilliance, particularly when





ΔOX□ It feels a bit wrong making sure you find all the collectables; you're basically looting from a warzone.

getting close to the heart of combat. By far the best sections are the ones that play it completely straight. Squelching through the miserable trenches trying to piece together a broken cart; digging through the maze of tunnels on the front line; pulling people out of wreckage while poison gas creeps in around you. There's some haunting, memorable stuff going on here, made all the more engaging with the UbiArt Framework engine's artistic capability, which surprisingly doesn't jar at all with the context. Like modern graphic novels now use what's often been considered a childish medium to tell some really deep stories, the unique art style is captivating. But if Ubisoft had simply stuck to the story it clearly wanted to tell, and provided a means with which to explore the horror of war without cutting back to cartoony shenanigans every time it started to get a bit too heavy, we'd be looking at a much higher score here.

Of the four human characters – French Emile, Belgian Anna, German Karl and American Freddie – Anna the nurse's segments are by far the most engaging, as she's able to take a more outside-looking-in perspective due to the nature of her job, which feels much easier to relate to. Stressful QTE mini-games (hang on, don't get annoyed yet) to patch up the soldiers are surprisingly good, giving you a real sense of accomplishment every time. Being called on from all different directions because you're needed everywhere actually does a good job of inducing that panicky warzone feeling much more than some of the awkward puzzle-solving. The other guys have individual aspects to their segments as well, but being able to ding

someone on the head with a big spoon, for example, kind of does the opposite of making it feel like a war.

Valiant Hearts also suffers from a very familiar Ubisoft problem: unfair surprises just for the hell of it. With something like *Super Meat Boy*, you can look at a level and know how to do it first time, if you're skilled enough. It'll probably take you a hell of a lot longer than that, but it isn't because the game has thrown some unfair curveball at you just for the hell of it. Ubisoft's platformers just don't seem to know how to get through a game without trolling the player. There are a handful of sections that stick out sorely, needing you to know the level first in order to make your way through it – tolerable in something nonsense like *Rayman*, but when you're replaying what are supposed to be touching or engaging moments, it lifts you out of the attempted poignancy immediately.

There's good puzzling to be had, and some engaging stories here, but a lean towards either fictional fun or serious stories would have worked better. And while this was an interesting experiment, we really don't want to see a WWII game presented the same way.

Rebecca Richards

VERDICT

It's not the subject itself that makes us do a sucky-lemon face, it's the way it's diluted with slapstick. Some puzzles are great, platforming is good, but gameplay is a bit by-the-numbers.

64%

"THERE'S SOME HAUNTING AND MEMORABLE STUFF GOING ON HERE"



ΔOX□ While there are collectables because videogames, they're all trinkets and mementos of the time, with a mini history lesson attached.

DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION

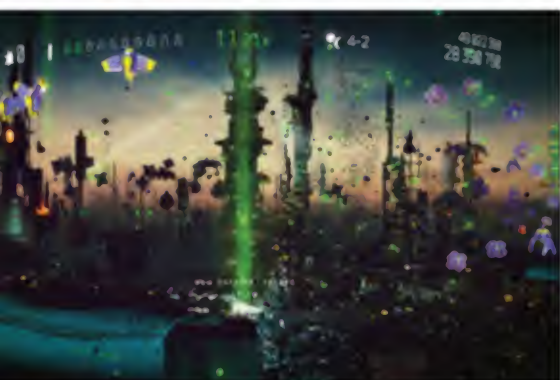
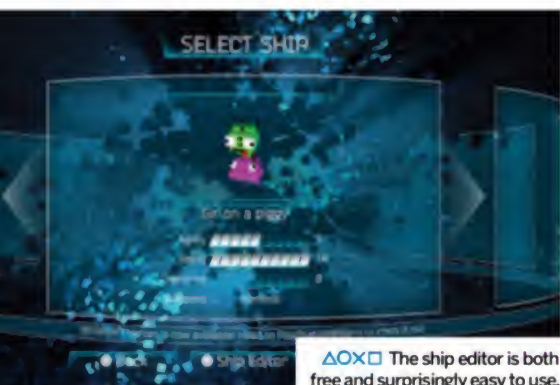


'Rhythm-action car chase sequence, go! Left, right, left, right, dodge... Aaaaand now we're going to pull your car back through the enemy. Which, btw, has now killed you. Sozpopz: There are some car chase sequences in *Valiant Hearts* that stand out from the main action like the musical levels in *Rayman Legends*. Barrels, explosions and tank movement sync with the classical music tracks, and while they're fun sections (if prone to *Rayman*'s pitfalls), there's something jarring and borderline exploitative about using such jaunty surrealism when you're actually throwing bombs at tanks with people inside and murdering them.





"EVERY BIT AS COMPELLING AND SOCIALLY DANGEROUS AS THE MAIN GAME"



Resogun Heroes

Keep saving the last humans

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Sony

DEVELOPER
Housemarque

PSN PRICE
£3.99

PLAYERS
1-2

AGE RATING
7+

TWITTER
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Trophies 6



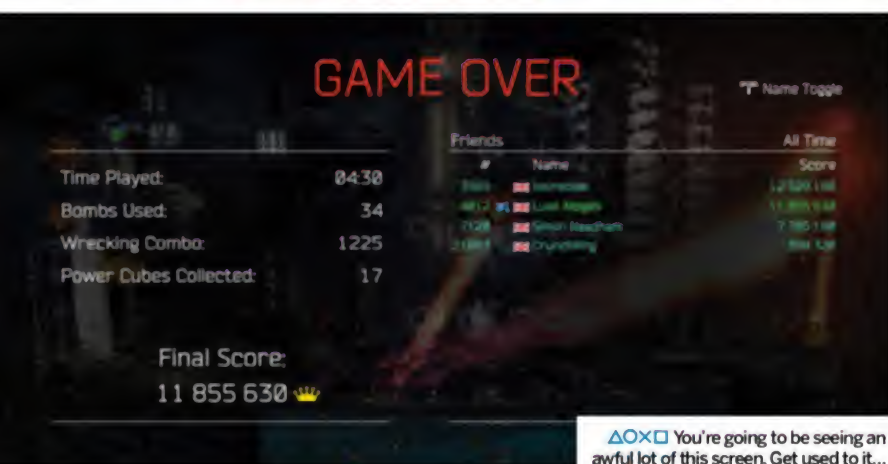
SOMETIMES, QUESTIONS JUST don't need to be asked. 'Would you like some more cake?'

for instance, or 'Do you want this money I found?', to offer a slightly less likely example. But the point stands – when Housemarque comes out and says 'We've made some DLC for *Resogun*... do you want it?', only a fool would say no. There was always a case to be made for *Resogun* being the best game on PS4 but with all this additional content, that case has become impossible to ignore. With three completely different ways to play and a crazy amount of ship variants to explore, *Resogun* just became a score attack gamer's dream.

This expansion is an odd thing to try to review, since the free update that added custom ships and the paid DLC modes actually arrived at the same time, but the synergy between them cannot be ignored. Without paying the modest fee, the update allows you to make your

own ships (or download those of other, more creative souls) and use them in the regular game. It's not just due to exploits and glitches that the leaderboards were wiped – this update, offering custom ship stats and loadouts – would have blown the rankings wide open no matter how legit/otherwise they were before. We've gone from three selectable ships to effectively thousands, each differently distributed stat point or weapon choice moving the goalposts and offering a variety of crafts that will perform better in some modes than others.

Each of the new modes is enjoyable but both appeal to different kinds of players – Survival is where the score attack potential is at but Demolition is a somewhat quirky addition that diverges so far from the traditional *Resogun* experience that we can see quite a lot of people hating it. It's a precision-based mode where ship weapons are replaced with a single bomb blast, used to propel projectiles around the cylindrical stage



in search of crazy scores. It's so far removed from traditional *Resogun* logic that we're not surprised that it doesn't seem overly popular right now. But the second you work out its new patterns and methods, it's every bit as compelling and socially dangerous as the main game – if anything, the limitation of only having a single recharging bomb only makes the mode even more intense. As with *Don't Starve*, the fact that the early stages are near identical doesn't help but still, it isn't long before the random elements kick in and there are scorching death balls everywhere to avoid, sometimes entirely by mistake – some of our best runs have come from loose wrecking balls randomly clipping multiple power-ups to create some kind of pinball armageddon but similarly, we've suffered humiliating losses when rogue bumpers have fired our shots back at us and caught us off-guard. Demolition isn't so sweet a science as *Resogun*'s other modes and while that won't stop us from chasing high scores, it is likely to push us more towards Survival mode for a long-term fix.

The clue's in the name here – simply try to stay alive for as long as possible while enemy waves continually ramp up and become more aggressive. Even with the original game's trio of playable vessels, this would be a leaderboard nightmare. But with the freedom to craft your own ship, experimentation quickly takes hold as you get to grips with the waves of enemies and create ships designed to make best use of the

time you have and the power-ups you receive. Humans aren't in limited supply here, either – they appear frequently and meeting your current quota for saves is rewarded with a new power-up. In another rule change, the multiplier doesn't drop off over time and unless you let humans die, it'll stay high for your entire run. With new enemies and items as well as a day/night cycle that makes the onslaught feel like it lasts far longer, this mode is *Resogun* at its most intense and it's just awesome.

The free update was easily enough to send people scurrying back to this amazing launch title, if only to pore over the thousands of custom ships that the community has made. But with the new modes and Trophies offered by *Heroes*, the *Resogun* icon on the PS4 dashboard becomes a dangerous distraction that will likely prevent you from playing other games as the game's 'one more go' trap takes hold and the real-world day/night cycle seems to go as fast as the in-game one. A couple of quid to turn a great game into an incredible one? That's an offer only a fool would turn down.

Luke Albigés

VERDICT

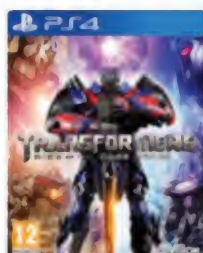
More of the same, but in what world could that possibly be considered a bad thing?

Resogun is one of the best games on PS4 and with this affordable update, it just got even better.

93%

Transformers: Rise Of The Dark Spark

One shall fall



ALSO ON PS3

PERHAPS

TRANSFORMERS: RISE

Of The Dark Spark's

greatest achievement is to take source material that's intrinsically exciting and bombastic – that of giant, gun-slinging robots that can change into jet planes – and transform it into something so painstakingly dull. The majority of *Rise Of The Dark Spark* is spent running from one objective marker to the next through brown and grey corridors, partaking in unsatisfying, lifeless gunplay as you're confronted by waves of enemies that only serve to prolong the tedium rather than to present any kind of interesting challenge as you take them down.

This is a game that fails to conjure up the sense of power that you might expect from piloting a hulking metallic robot, or to extract any mileage from the defining feature of the series on which it is based – that of transformation. Sure, there are a few sections that necessitate you using

a Transformer's jet or car form, but on a moment-to-moment basis, there's little to be gained, either in mechanical terms or purely out of sense of fun, from switching forms. That a *Transformers* game can't seem to think of a compelling reason for you to use its transformation mechanic is a damn shame.

If *Transformers* does have a strength, it's to be found in variety. There is a reasonably extensive range of weapons and special abilities to unlock, equip and experiment with. The game's weapons feel distinctive enough that there's some incentive to try them all out in order to find your favourites. Continuing on the theme of variety, *Rise Of The Dark Spark's* campaign sees you switching between the perspective of the Autobots and the Decepticons, stepping into the shoes of an array of different Transformers as you do so. Each Transformer has their own special ability, either affecting the way that the player approaches battle, or allowing the game's

DETAILS

PUBLISHER

Activision

DEVELOPER

Edge Of Reality

PSN PRICE

£54.99

PLAYERS

1-4

AGE RATING

12+

TWITTER

@Activision

Trophies 51





△○×□ This robot is a samurai, and we're not sure why...



“THE VARIETY THAT TRANSFORMERS PROVIDES AMOUNTS TO LITTLE MORE THAN HAND-WAVING”

developer to structure levels around a particular Transformer's skill.

That's all well and good, but variety doesn't really count for much when the foundation on which it is built is so weak, as it is here. In any case, when *Rise Of The Dark Spark* does change things up a little, it's rarely justified by actually making the game any more enjoyable to play. The variety that this game provides amounts to little more than hand-waving, designed to distract you from the fact that you are playing a game that is fundamentally poor. The addition of a couple of shoddy grappling sections, some vehicle-based levels and some terrible platforming does nothing to change that.

TROPHY CABINET



Use Optimus Prime's shield ability to block Lockdown's blasts and then hit him with melee DEFEAT LOCKDOWN attacks once he drops to ground level.



Try and cut enemies down quickly as they move in from three possible directions. Periodically check to make sure none have slipped past. TREAD LIGHTLY

While *Transformers: Rise Of The Dark Spark* is pretty much consistently boring, those who can bear to stick with it until the end will be rewarded with one or two stronger levels (though most players will be forgiven for dropping out long before then). Do those stronger moments compensate for slogging through hours of tedious combat, miles of drab, cheap-looking corridors and dealing with the frustration of the odd difficulty spike and occasional bug? No, absolutely not. It's worth mentioning that the game includes a multiplayer mode called Escalation in which four players are confronted by waves of enemies. We've no complaints about it being there, but would be astonished if you and your pals can't find a better shooter to take online.

Transformers: Rise Of The Dark Spark couldn't be a poorer reflection of its source material. Lacking spectacle, excitement, polish and – crucially – fun, there's little reason to recommend this game to anybody. It saves itself from being quite as bad as it could be by at least providing the player with some variety when it comes to weapons and mechanics, but that's not enough to salvage it. Think of it this way: there might be more than one way to skin a cat, but they're all thoroughly unpleasant.

Paul Walker-Emig

VERDICT

With its dreary environments, badly implemented mechanics, poor level design and extremely flaccid gunplay, *Rise Of The Dark Spark* is a resounding failure in most respects.

30%

REVIEW

SACRED 3

PS3



CITADEL'S GUARD ENHANCED
LEVEL 3

Sacred 3

Triple trouble



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Deep Silver

DEVELOPER
Keen Games

PSN PRICE
£49.99

PLAYERS
1-4

AGE RATING
16

TWITTER
@Sacred_World

Trophies 38



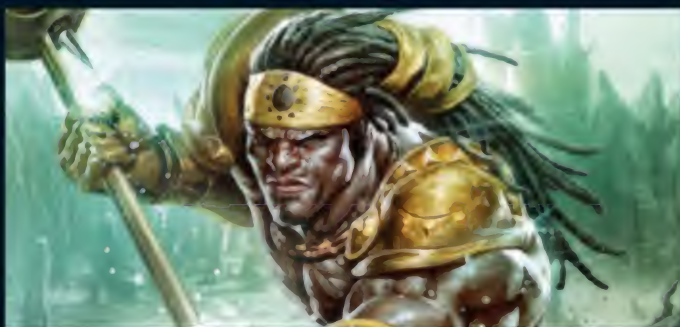
IT MUST BE tough, developing a game like *Sacred 3*. You know, in the back of your head, that nobody really cares about your game. *Sacred* has always been a C-list franchise at best, and even the die-hard fans are hesitant to embrace a new developer after the death of original studio, Ascaron.

To be fair to *Sacred 3*, it seems to know its place in life, and embraces its budget leanings. This is an isometric action-RPG like they used to make in the old days, most reminiscent of the old *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance* games on PS2. Just like those titles, *Sacred 3* is a simple but enjoyable experience that is far better when played with friends.

Gameplay is basic, and will be familiar to anyone with experience in the genre. You'll only have one main attack button (which you'll be pressing A LOT) as well as a bash move to interrupt enemies' attacks. You can also roll or block, as well as grab and throw lighter foes. Finally, you can have two special abilities equipped at a time, and leap on downed foes to execute them. That's your lot,

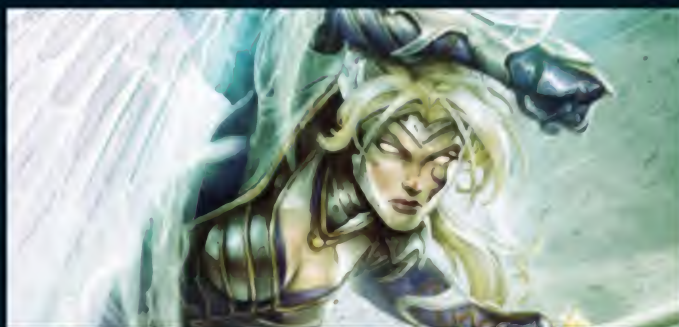


THE FOUR HORSEMEN You don't actually ride a horse



MARAK

Marak the Safiri warrior is your go-to guy if you like characters with lots of health, enormous weapons and little in the way of subtlety. He likes to make things go smash.



CLAIRE

Our favourite, this Seraphim paladin has a nice mixture of melee attacks and holy magic that is useful for controlling crowds. Plus, glowing wings are always cool, right? Right.



VARJA

Your best pick if you prefer ranged combat, Varja has a ton of cool bow attacks that can support your friends from a distance, as well as explosive traps in case enemies get too close.



ALITHEA

An Ancarian lancer, Alithea pokes at foes from a distance while supporting her allies with a variety of useful buffs and spells. She's especially useful when playing with a few friends.

△○×□ Small side missions accompany the larger story-based ones, but all have you doing the same thing (pressing X a lot).

△○×□ You won't find random gear lying around, another element common to RPGs that *Sacred 3* lacks. Instead, you'll be granted a new weapon occasionally, but that's about as far as inventory management goes.

and while you'll unlock new abilities and weapons as you play, your moveset never becomes more complicated.

You'll have four characters to choose from, and while it might not sound like a lot, they all have significantly unique play-styles to set them apart and offer a new approach to the game. Of course, you'll be hammering attack regardless of who you pick, but variation in weapon types and special abilities keeps things interesting. You've got your basic warrior and ranger archetypes, as well as a holy paladin and a lancer based around buffing up the party – none exactly redefining RPG classes, but all fun in their own way. There is also a fifth, DLC character (yep, day-one DLC!) for those purchasing the special edition, or inclined to part with a bit of cash.

Fans of the original games might be unhappy to hear that *Sacred 3* is not open-world, as its predecessors were. Instead, you'll choose your mission from a linear map screen. The loss is a painful one, as one of the core elements of any RPG is exploration, and without it *Sacred* undoubtedly suffers.

Story has never been a focus, or a strong point, of the series, but it reaches new lows here. The tone is bizarre – Keen Games has taken the light-hearted, tongue-in-cheek approach of the last

games and gone overboard with it. The attempt to build a story is barebones, with cutscenes consisting of static images accompanied by voice-over. The dialogue tries to be irreverent and charming, but is distracting in how awful it is. We don't care if it is a comedy – no fantasy game should ever contain the word 'amazeballs'. Occasionally, the

"FANS MIGHT BE UNHAPPY TO HEAR THAT SACRED 3 IS NOT AN OPEN-WORLD GAME"

writing raises a chuckle, with a bad guy who keeps mispronouncing words a particular favourite, but on the whole this is just really bad.

Graphically also, *Sacred 3* is sub-par. You obviously don't expect incredible visuals from an isometric RPG, but even by those reduced standards, this is a muddy, ugly affair. Environments are repetitive and textures are blurry and dull. We get the feeling the PS3 wasn't the lead development platform here, and odds are the game will look a fair bit better on PC.

Thing is, it doesn't really matter. You play a game like *Mass Effect* for the story. You play a game like *Sacred 3* to mess around with friends and slap

X thousands of times until the button breaks. In that regard, extremely rough edges and all, *Sacred 3* does enough.

Turn your brain off and play with a friend and *Sacred 3*, just like the *Dark Alliance* games back in the day, is a simple, enjoyable way to spend a few hours. It manages to be more than the sum of its mediocre parts, entertaining

in a repetitive, mindless way that harks back to the side-scrolling brawlers of old. If you are expecting an epic, story-driven RPG then run far, far away. But if you want a simple but enjoyable button-basher to enjoy with a friend, *Sacred 3* is more fun than it probably should be.

Sam Smith

VERDICT

Cheap, ugly and terribly written, *Sacred 3* is still quite fun in co-op, in a simple sort of way. Leave expectations at the door, turn off your brain and smash X a few hundred times.

60%

OR YOU COULD TRY

△ **DIABLO III** Not exactly the same, but similar enough. It's a *Diablo* game made by Blizzard – of course it's great.

REVIEW ROUND-UP

PEOPLE SOMETIMES CONSIDER 'more of the same' to be a bad thing, but this month's selection of games is a perfect counterpoint to this notion – each does enough different to the source material it riffs on to offer a new experience and benefits from it hugely. As DLC, though, we'd be surprised if **DARK SOULS II: CROWN OF THE SUNKEN KING [A]** was anything but more of the same. It feels like From Software polled players on the things they hated and feared most in the main game and made an expansion based on this feedback. Again, while that may sound like a negative, it's actually exactly what we want from a game designed to intimidate players before destroying them. The new Sanctum area is available from around the midway point of the game, but trying to take it on before you're decked out in end-game gear and have a full working knowledge of everything the core game offers and threatens is basically suicide. It truly is a wretched place, littered with devious traps, powerful foes and perhaps most interestingly, the introduction of puzzles – while ultimately pretty simple,

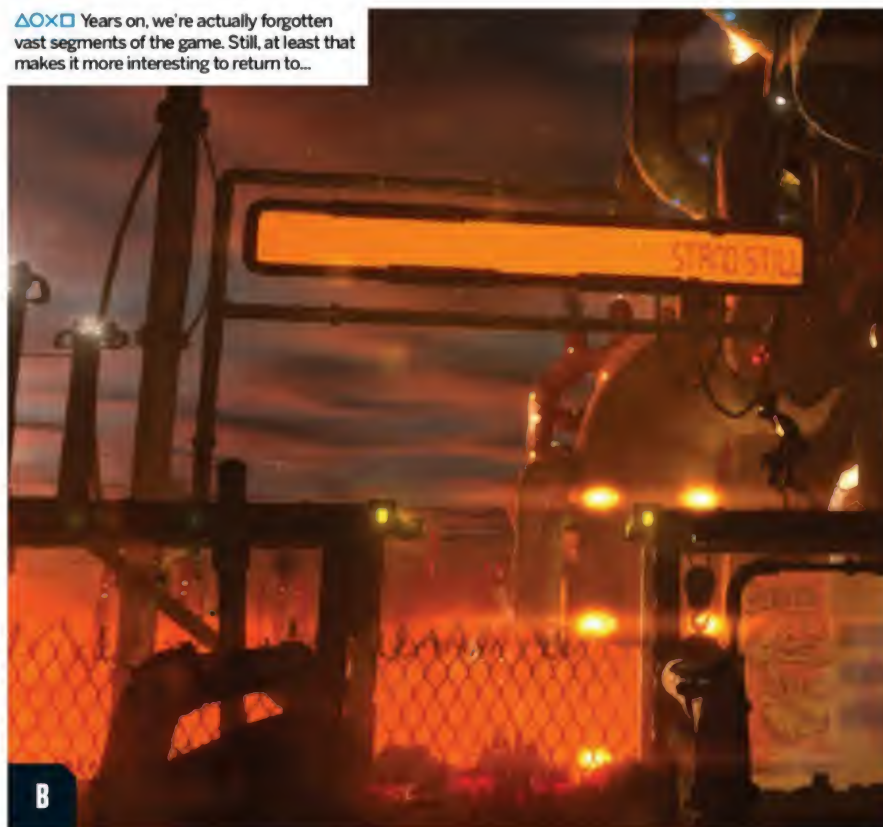
these do a great job of coaxing players into making reckless leaps of faith and you'll come to rely on the messages left by others more than anywhere else in the game. Just don't get too invested in them – not every note-scribbler is as helpful as you might think. Between the massive open areas to explore, the raised challenge bar and all the new gear, enemies and bosses you'll face, we're both excited and terrified to see what the next two DLC packs will add to the already horrific land of Drangleic.

“TRYING TO TAKE ON THE DARK SOULS II DLC BEFORE YOU'RE DECKED OUT IN END-GAME GEAR IS BASICALLY SUICIDE”

There's a different kind of familiarity to **ODDWORLD: NEW 'N' TASTY [B]**, a game drenched in warm and fuzzy nostalgia but one oddly not all that far removed from the perilous obstacle course that is *Dark Souls II*. It's a beautiful remake of PlayStation classic *Abe's Oddysee*, one of

the original puzzle-platformer hybrids and widely considered to be one of the best games on the platform. This new version looks amazing in full 1080p, almost like you remember the original looking way back in the day – how it looked in your head when graphics still left enough to the imagination that you'd often have to fill in the blanks yourself. As with so many older videogames, it's damn hard and figuring out the solution to a tricky puzzle is only half the battle. Without the timing and execution to pull off the daring escape plans you conjure up, you're just gonna end up getting Abe and/or any number of his 299 Mudokon buddies (that's nearly three times as many as in the original game, though mostly because they're encountered in greater numbers now)

△×□ Years on, we're actually forgotten vast segments of the game. Still, at least that makes it more interesting to return to...



B

△×□ No, these aren't the phantoms of other online players – they're a new enemy type who look confusingly similar on purpose. Curse you, From Software!



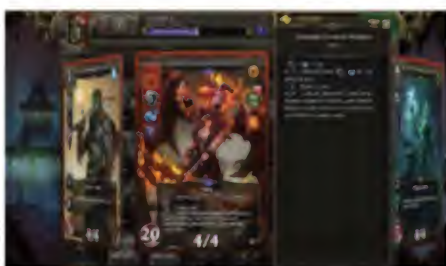
A





blown to bits in some horrible manner or another. Not only does it hold up brilliantly today, it's perhaps also the best way to play a gaming classic from yesteryear. High praise indeed, but this labour of love is worth every bit.

While there's something of a trial-and-error theme running through the first two games here, the next is a completely different story. **ZEN PINBALL 2: DEADPOOL [C]** is the latest in a near-faultless run of superb tables for the pinball collection and above all else, we love the business model here – the free standalone game offers a single basic table to mess around on to your heart's content, backed up by an ever-growing arsenal of classic, original and licensed additional tables available across all platforms for a single modest fee. Deadpool's table is easily in line with most of the other Marvel tables on offer (that is to say, excellent) and as in last year's mediocre hack-and-slash game, the titular maniac makes it worth playing on his own – a mid-breakdown Nolan



North shouts and screams about anything, everything and nothing, the table packed with opportunities for the merc to smash down the fourth wall. It's not as involving or complex as some of the other tables (*Moon Knight* or *Civil War*, for instance), nor does it really have many of the game-changing gimmicks of something like the *Infinity Gauntlet* playfield. But between the pinball tables within pinball tables (pinception, if you will) and the sly digs at other Marvel characters and tables, this is still worth picking up for when the other tables start to feel a little too serious.

That exact criticism is actually our primary one of our final game **MIGHT AND MAGIC: DUEL OF CHAMPIONS FORGOTTEN WARS [D]**, the belated arrival of Ubisoft's free-to-play PC card game on console. At a glance, comparisons to Blizzard's all-conquering *Hearthstone* are inevitable. But this isn't a case of Ubisoft jumping on the bandwagon – in fact, *Duel Of Champions* actually got there first. Sadly, though, despite its additional depth and complexity, *Forgotten Wars* simply isn't all that much fun. *Hearthstone* is playful and doesn't take itself too seriously,



△×□ 3D animated characters are often distracting on Zen Pinball's tables, and Deadpool seems to be doing it on purpose, the bloody scamp.



which makes it far easier to play for hours on end than this po-faced and sometimes overwhelming take on the increasingly popular genre. It's still good, don't get us wrong. But after seeing Blizzard knock down the barrier to entry that had for years restricted the appeal of this genre, it's just a little strange to see Ubisoft rebuild that barrier three times as tall. Still, with *Hearthstone* still not coming to console any time soon, putting the hours in to get to grips with this more complex spin on the same formula is pretty much the best option we have right now.

△×□ There's a lot to take in, with loads of different mechanics and hundreds of cards that all employ them in different ways.

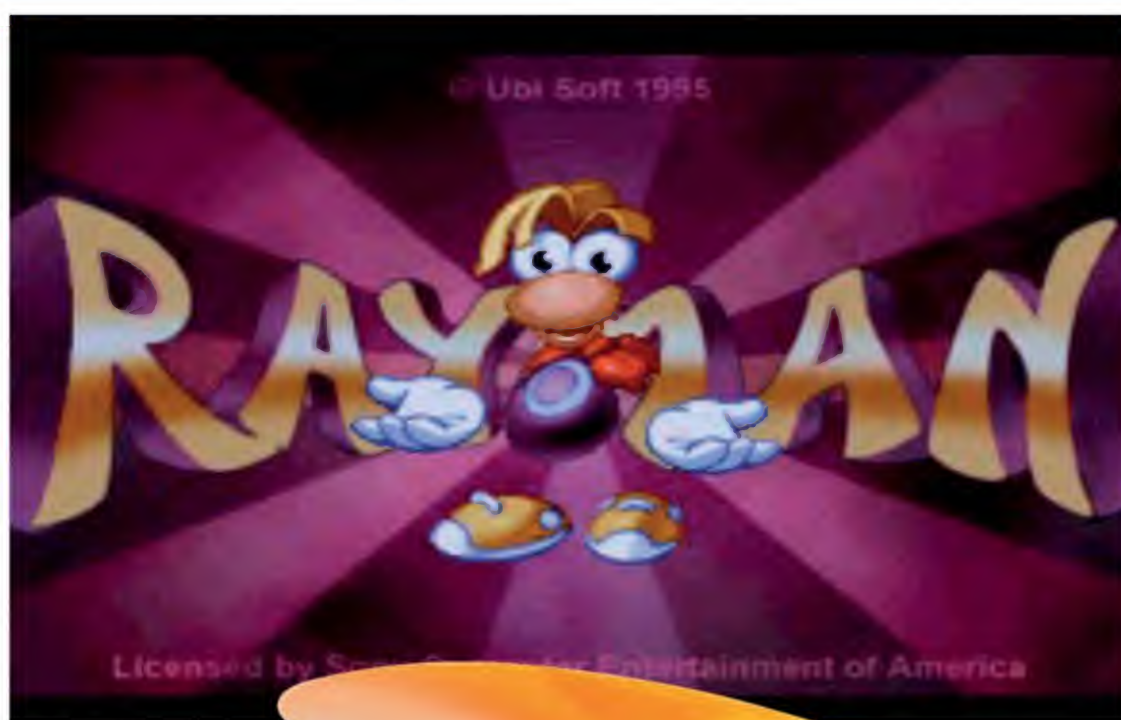




PUBLISHER UBISOFT | DEVELOPER UBISOFT MONTPELLIER, UBISOFT MILAN | FORMAT PLAYSTATION
RELEASE DATE 1 SEPTEMBER 1995 | PLAY SCORE 87% | METACRITIC SCORE N/A

The Making Of... RAYMAN

Doing with platforming in the Nineties what *Grand Theft Auto V* did with open-world games in 2013, Rayman took everything the platforming genre had done so far and distilled it into something truly brilliant. Rebecca Richards finds out from Michel Ancel how Rayman punched, danced and bounced his way to success



So it's 1995. You live in your massive chained jeans and band hoodies, you rock out to Nirvana, and somewhere at home there are shelves lined with the sound future investment of Beanie Babies. You just saw *GoldenEye*, and you're looking forward to renting it at Blockbuster when it comes out on video. Rather excitingly, you bought your massive grey PlayStation a few months ago because almost everything you've seen about it showcases its ability for 3D gaming to catapult various genres into new levels of awesome. So what is it that you find yourself inexplicably drawn to? Well, a bright, adorable 2D platformer, apparently.

Released at launch (in America, at least), the scrolling 2D platformer *Rayman* would go on to sell millions of copies worldwide, and become the best-selling game on the PlayStation in the UK. That's right, beating *Tomb Raider*, *Final Fantasy VII*, *Crash Bandicoot*, and all the rest, gamers in the UK loved *Rayman*, despite its stubborn 2D-ness on a console successfully experimenting with 3D gameplay. To top it all off, *Rayman* wasn't even originally conceived as a PlayStation game, which in retrospect seems bizarre when you consider its success on the format.

"To tell you the truth, I actually started working alone on *Rayman* using an Atari ST," says Michel Ancel, *Rayman*'s developer and creator of the iconic character. "I was doing the sound, the art, the programming and the animation. Then with Frederic Houde, a programming friend, we decided to make a Super Nintendo CD version, but the hardware was never released. So we decided to move on to different

hardware. By this time, there was a big console war brewing between the likes of NEC, Nintendo, Sega, Atari, 3DO and others." An Atari Jaguar





△OX□ This is Joe the Extra-Terrestrial's cafe. It's had a blackout and Rayman has to help him out. Obviously.

version was also created, but the power of the PlayStation proved irresistible, and it was the PlayStation version that ultimately sold the most copies by far.

Ancel himself can't pinpoint exactly why *Rayman* became so popular on PlayStation. "Honestly, I just can't explain," he admits. "It was the time of the first 3D games, like *Toshinden* and *Ridge Racer*, and *Rayman* was still 2D. Maybe the rule is that players don't really care about technical detail; they just follow the fun and

"MAYBE THE RULE IS THAT PLAYERS DON'T REALLY CARE ABOUT TECHNICAL DETAIL; THEY JUST FOLLOW THE FUN"

that's all." Ancel's modesty on the subject is refreshing, but going back and playing the original *Rayman* proves that the game still remains a masterclass in platform game design. With excellent replayability, motivations to explore hidden areas, and encouragement to be creative, *Rayman* is difficult enough to provide a real challenge while lovely enough that you just don't mind spending that amount of time in the world. It's here that a lot of the ideas first appeared that we see now in *Rayman Origins* and *Rayman Legends*, like music/food-themed levels, shrinking Rayman sections, auto-scrolling levels, Viking ladies, and rescuing little trapped friends.

Apparently not due to any particular creative decision, *Rayman* was a 2D game primarily because of its relatively long and rather schizophrenic development cycle. "It took us around two years with the final team to complete. The constant change of hardware, from one console

to another, was by far the biggest technical issue," says Ancel. Still, sticking to the traditional platforming model and established gameplay mechanics but combining that with the as-yet-unseen capability of the PlayStation was an excellent match for Ancel and Ubisoft. Add to that a likeable, engaging player-character and you've got yourself a winning formula.

While today we've got interchangeable Dudes With Guns™, in the Nineties, videogames were all about the characters, and hooking in adults and kids alike with an attention-grabbing icon. With the biggest competition at the time being Mario and Sonic, Rayman needed to bring something new to the table. Having so far

appeared in over 100 games, and not really fitting in to the Nineties' rad hyper awesomeness by being a squat little plumber, Mario was feeling a little outdated as an icon, while Sonic personified that rad hyper awesomeness perhaps too much, creating a gap in the market for a new character for a new generation of soon-to-be hardcore gamers to connect with. While Rayman would be joined (and some might say overshadowed) by Crash Bandicoot and Ms Croft as a PlayStation icon in the first few months of the PlayStation's life, for now this happy little guy was proving that you didn't need to hop onto some fad to create an engaging character. The result is that Sonic now looks vaguely embarrassing, like looking at photos of yourself when you were younger and had that ridiculous 'cool' haircut (what were you thinking?), while Rayman's naturally happy nature is still just as likeable as ever.

BLUFFER'S GUIDE

Everything you need to know in five facts



1 While it was developed for the PlayStation, *Rayman* was also released for the Atari Jaguar.



2 There are six areas in the game in total, with three to four levels to beat in most.



3 In order to get to the last level, Rayman has to find and free every trapped Electoon.



4 The reason *Rayman* gets so difficult is because Ubisoft didn't focus as much on playtesting.



5 The awesome soundtrack to the game actually has several different composers.



△×□ Rayman gets to keep various powers as he progresses, giving you a real sense of achievement as you go on.

STANDOUT MOMENT



Fighting Mr Skops

A boss battle with a sting in its tail

The sixth boss in *Rayman*, Mr Skops throws you something of a curveball. The other bosses have set attack patterns that, while sometimes tricky, are usually pretty easy to figure out. Panic sets in with Mr Skops, though, as he destroys the safety of the platforms around you. The relief

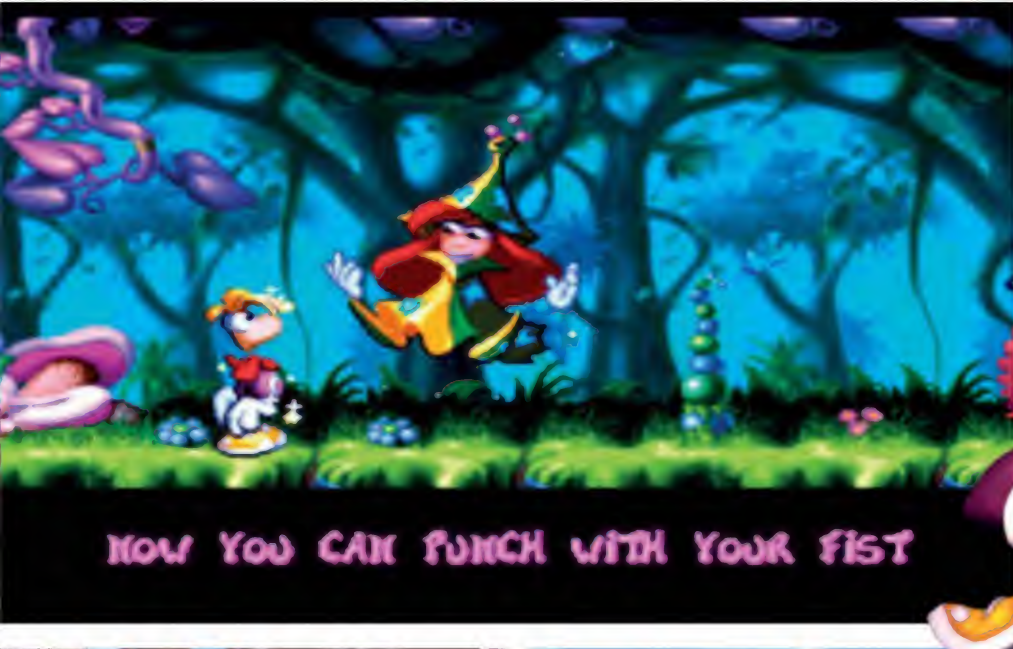
as you figure out you're not actually supposed to fight him at this point is tangible, and despite there being great bosses in this game – a literal saxophone being one of them – it's the creativity of the Mr Skops battle that has to make this one of our favourite moments in the game.

Like a great band's first album, the character of Rayman spent several years in conception before receiving a platform to be fully realised. "I first drew Rayman when I was just a teenager. At the time I was simply trying to teach myself to draw, make music, and write code in order to realise my dream of making videogames," says Ancel. A few years passed between these sketches and being able to implement them into a game for real, while Ancel made several games before being hired by Ubisoft Montpellier and working on *The Brain Blasters* for the Atari ST. It was 1992 when Ancel began working on *Rayman*, knowing he would be in direct competition with these established characters from other consoles.

"It's just a creative process driven by what pops out of your brain and what amuses you," says Ancel, when asked specifically whether Rayman's creation was intended to stand out from the other platforming icons of the time. "When I imagined Rayman for the very first time, I was just a kid who had no idea that someday he would be standing on shelves next to the likes of Mario and

Sonic." We guess there's no beating around the bush; we just straight up want to know why Rayman doesn't have any arms or legs. In our heads, we're picturing a character presentation with Michel Ancel cheerfully putting forward a character all about physical movement that's missing what you might think would be rather vital elements of that. Apparently, that wasn't exactly the case. "When I was trying to get a handle on animation, I realised how hard it is to move arms and legs convincingly," says Ancel. "Since my imagination is always getting ahead of my ability to realise many of my ideas, I had to stick with what I could humbly get away with.

"As for Rayman, he was doomed to go limbless once the concept took off on its own! Sometimes accidents like that make for the happiest results. After all, he wouldn't have a wicked extendable punch and a 'hairlycopter', among other things, if he had limbs like any other hero." And Rayman certainly wasn't any other hero. When he fights the first boss, Bzzit, he doesn't strike some kind of cool power pose. He doesn't smirk at his own ability or give the player a thumbs up. No, he



ΔOX□ It looks lovely, doesn't it? Beware, these pretty visuals mask rock-hard platforming challenges.

does a little dance, pats his fallen foe on the head and gives him a high five. Then in the next level, they're inexplicably friends and Rayman is riding him around. Smiling, and taking real joy in his adventures, Rayman didn't try to show the world how super-tough and badass he was, because he just didn't need to; the game's difficulty spoke for itself.

Anyone who's completed the Picture City levels can attest to *Rayman's* crazy difficulty (and if you consider yourself a

games, PlayStation's *Rayman* was absolutely gorgeous, running at 60 frames per second, betraying none of the platforming skill test horror found within. *Rayman's* lush, vibrant design clearly gave a few nods to Nineties cartoons, with cartoon eyes bouncing away from enemies as you take them down, and Rayman's screeching car brake noise as he stops running, not to mention the colour palette itself, but Ancel tells us about a more natural inspiration.

“WHEN I WAS TRYING ANIMATION, I REALISED HOW HARD IT IS TO MOVE ARMS AND LEGS CONVINCINGLY”

platform gamer and haven't attempted it, we're setting that challenge for you right now). The sense of accomplishment as you progressed – sometimes very slowly – through the levels was tangible, setting the stage for later videogames like *Spelunky* to go nuts with difficulty spikes. Not that you'd have realised it to look at it; like the newer *Rayman*

“As a child, I spent a lot of time close to the rivers, chasing strange insects, climbing on big trees,” he says. “When you're a child, everything seems huge and extraordinary. When I started working on a *Rayman* game, it all started with trees and strange creatures.” This sense of exploration and child-like joy is reflected in everything from the bouncy



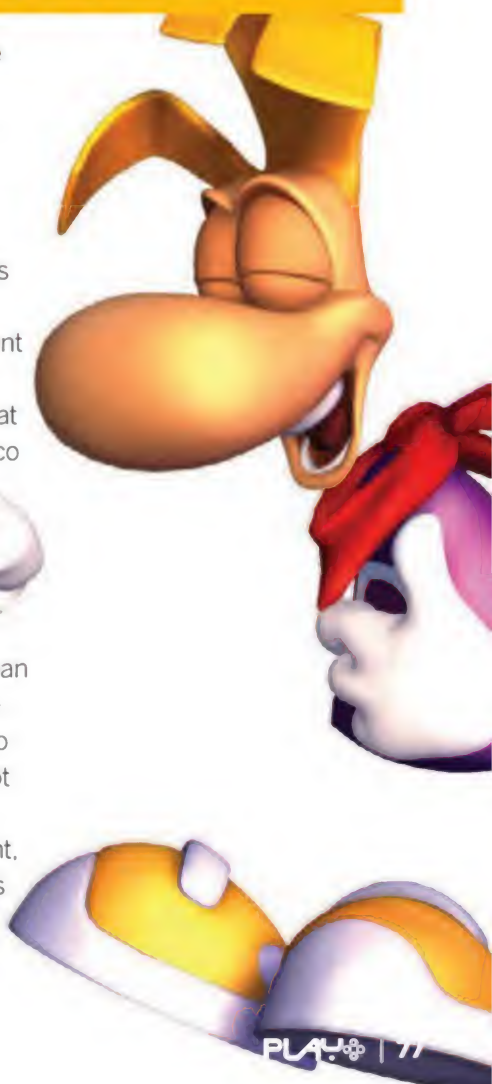
ΔOX□ You might recognise some of the themes if you've played recent *Rayman*.

2D VS 3D

It's a telling sign of the success of the 2D platformer that Ubisoft has returned with *Origins* and *Legends* to the familiar 2D style. While he had his teenage years dabbling in 3D, we almost universally think of Rayman as being 2D. While it might seem bizarre to have taken Rayman in the 3D direction for *Rayman 2: The Great Escape*, as Ancel revealed to us, the 2D art direction was more about the lengthy development time and less about making an artistic decision to remain with that style. While they got great reviews, there's something slightly flavourless about 3D *Rayman* games; we hope Ubisoft sticks to making excellent 2D platformers.

sound effects and fantasy dreamscape worlds to the smiling face of Rayman himself. Ancel himself unsurprisingly has nothing but fondness for Rayman. “Rayman is the guy who got me to a place I feel lucky to be: making games and having fun doing it,” he says, and it's testament to his original vision for the game that this sense of fun is still present in the most recent *Rayman* games.

There's a real sense with *Rayman* that this is the game that Michel Ancel and co really wanted to make. From the jazzy soundtrack to the bizarre creatures, chilled-out synths on rock-hard levels to Rayman himself, the creativity behind this game is something that was clearly allowed to blossom to create something that, if not new, was a refined culmination of the genre so far. It was and is bloody brilliant, in other words, and hasn't lost any of its charm or appeal since its release.



INTERVIEW

LIKE A BOSS

Jim Ryan, president and CEO of SCE Europe, discusses the success of the PS4 and what the future might hold for the most powerful console ever made

Last year, Sony set out its intention to be all about the gamers and games. Do you feel you're delivering on that mission statement?

Yeah, I think ultimately it doesn't matter what I think – it just matters what consumers think and how accepting or not accepting they are of a platform. The evidence so far in terms of overwhelming demand for our platform would suggest that, yes, we are delivering on that intention. We always think that we can do better and do more but I think that the way in which demand is far outstripping supply and is just starting to regulate now is telling. It's been pretty grim in some parts of continental Europe because we've been prioritising the UK, not because we're Brits but because the competitive situation in the UK and North America is more acute than it is on the continent and so the UK has been prioritised.

There have been some high-profile delays to games that were due to launch alongside PS4 and while the reasoning has been sound, do you feel it affected the impact of the arrival of this new generation of consoles?

I think it was a relief to have *Watch Dogs* arrive and it was well worth the wait – sales of the game have been fantastic and the guys in the UK collaborated brilliantly with Ubisoft and that had a marked effect on our own business. We have *The Last Of Us Remastered* and then *Destiny* coming and then it really starts to ramp from there. But yes, maybe the first half of the year was possibly a little quieter than we would have liked, I think that's fair comment.

Is the emphasis on the value added proposition of PlayStation indicative of the fact that platform-exclusive triple-A titles are less of a viable proposition than they were in the past?

That's correct. The economics of making a game and publishing it for a third party or an independent organisation requires them to do their arithmetic and we do ours and it's just very difficult to find a model that works and allows a third-party game to be platform-exclusive. We view it as additional benefits for the PlayStation owner, rather than anyone losing out and with these sorts of arrangements, by and large, the content does come to the other platform.

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whether it's 30 days or 60 days or whatever, so I don't think it's perceived as a negative.

It was recently reported that PS4 hardware is now profitable. Will this allow you to take more risks or reinvest that money in new technologies and opportunities?

I think it takes quite a lot of the pressure off – although there's always pressure, believe me. I lived through all of these cycles and with PS3; it's a matter of public record that we lost \$2.5 billion in the first year of PS3, the loss on last year for PS4 was tiny, \$70 million in the first year, which we've never done before. The guys in Tokyo did a fabulous job engineering the thing, and the way

to innovate from a position of strength than if you're haemorrhaging cash and we have been through those times and it's just difficult. We do have tough objectives but there is innovation and drive to take things forward and if you do that you get into another of these virtuous cycles which is where we want to stay.

PlayStation Plus has been going great, even more so since PlayStation 4 launched. What do you feel has been the key to the success of PS Plus?

We've thought very hard and we've worked very hard to make sure it is a great consumer proposition and yes, let's not dissimulate

games up or you can invite those consumers that are using that network functionality to pay for it. We're not hiding the fact that we're asking people to pay for multiplayer but I think we've done it a way that's been proper and fair and that's been reflected in the reaction. You know, UK consumers are not shy of complaining when they feel they've been exploited and we really haven't had that.

PlayStation 4 has experienced a largely positive year – what does the year ahead hold for the system?

It will be delivering a great holiday 2014 and then 2015 should be potentially even bigger. We've navigated these lifecycles of platforms on a number of occasions now and we've an idea of how to do it and it'll be about driving as far and as deep as we can but at the same time developing that innovation too. Project Morpheus, if we decide that that's a road we're going to go down some more we'll have plenty to do with that and building PlayStation Now as a strategically fundamental part of our strategy in the medium- and long-term, there'll be a lot of work building that up. PlayStation Now, if done correctly, really has the potential to explode the target audience because the barrier to entry of needing a console to play PlayStation games is suddenly removed. I think if we do it right – and it's a big if – the future is potentially extremely interesting. It's going to be a busy year.

"IT'S OBVIOUSLY EASIER TO INNOVATE FROM A POSITION OF STRENGTH THAN IF YOU'RE HAEMORRHAGING CASH"

in which we've sold more than we anticipated it's the nature of the industry that you get into that virtuous cycle, volumes go up and you get economies of scale and all that so yeah, the cost structure is in good shape and it's a much better position to be in.

Do the likes of PS Now, PS TV and Morpheus benefit from that enhanced profitability?

We have stringent financial targets and we'll be expected to meet those but it's obviously easier

or disguise the fact that with the launch of PlayStation 4 you do have to subscribe to PlayStation Plus if you want to play online multiplayer. We have made step changes both in the functionality and the robustness of our network and I think those step changes were needed but they come at a price and somewhere along the way – as a corporation accountable to shareholders – that money has to be recovered somewhere. You can do that a few ways, you can put the price of the hardware up or of the

TROPHY GUIDE

THE LAST OF US REMASTERED

The trickier Trophies you'll tackle on your way to another Platinum Trophy



EVERYTHING
WE'VE BEEN
THROUGH

FULLY UPGRADE JOEL WITH SUPPLEMENTS

■ **DON'T EXPECT TO** find enough supplements to fully upgrade Joel in a single playthrough – you'll be towards the tail end of a New Game+ run before this is even possible and it could even take a third playthrough (or at least the start of one). It's worth noting that Shiv Master, the most expensive of the skills, apparently isn't required for the Trophy, so you can ignore it if you're in a hurry to get this Silver.



MASTER OF UNLOCKING

UNLOCK ALL SHIV DOORS

■ **SHIV DOORS USUALLY** lead to plentiful resource caches and other collectibles, so it's a good idea to save your shivs so you don't miss any. There are two in the Outskirts (one in Downtown and one in Museum), two in Bill's Town (both in The Woods), four in Pittsburgh (two in Alone And Forsaken, one in Financial District and one in Escape The City), one in Tommy's Dam (Hydroelectric Dam), one in The University (Science Building), one in Lakeside Resort (Cabin Resort), one in Bus Depot (Underground Tunnel) and one in The Firefly Lab (The Hospital), making 13 in total.



FIREFLY & HUNTER

COMPLETE THE FIREFLY JOURNEY & COMPLETE THE HUNTER JOURNEY

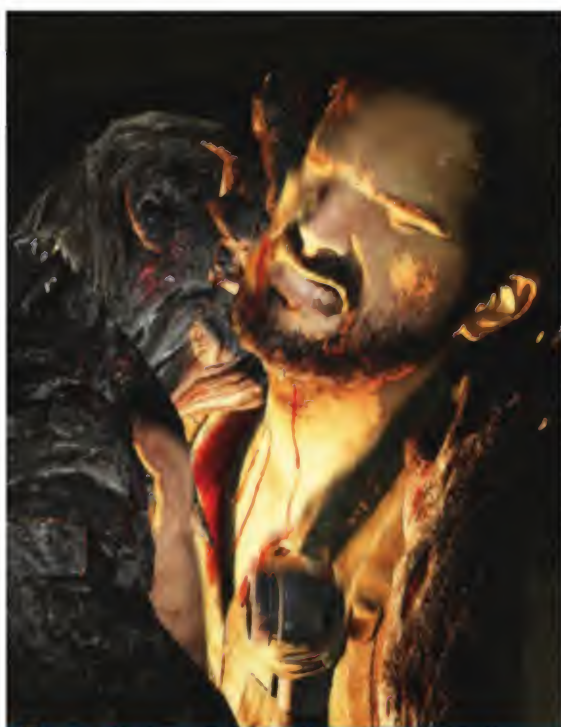
■ **THESE TWO WILL** be the most time-consuming multiplayer trophies, and they'll test your resolve along the way. When you begin multiplayer for the first time, you'll choose to be either a Firefly or Hunter – the choice is purely cosmetic, not even affecting matchmaking, so do as you will. Your mission is to build up your clan and keep it alive for 12 weeks. Each match you play counts as a day – doing well and winning will increase your population, and losing consistently will lower it. The more people you have, the better you'll have to do to add more, so odds are you'll even out at some point – that's totally fine.

The real challenge comes from the events that will occur from time to time. To begin with, these tend to be once a week but will eventually become more frequent. Events can be good or bad – some will offer the chance to gain new people, others threaten to remove some. Each time you'll be able to choose an objective to complete as you play, over the course of three

games. How well you do determines how many people you either gain or lose.

To begin with these events are innocent enough, and even if you fail completely you'll only lose 60 per cent of your population. Get toward the end of the 12 weeks however and 100 per cent loss events pop up with surprising regularity, each one threatening to put you right back to square one. It's for this reason that we recommend saving the objectives you think you'll find easiest for these late-game events. While it might be tempting to use them early and gain a bunch of people, it's far more important to make sure you don't throw it all away at the end. You can select the same objective more than once, but it gets harder each time, so bear that in mind.

Complete the 12 weeks with your clan still intact and the Trophy will be yours! Now take a deep breath and do it all over again as the other team.



NO MATTER WHAT - SURVIVOR

COMPLETE THE GAME ON SURVIVOR

■ **THANKFULLY, COMPLETION DIFFICULTY** Trophies stack so you're not looking at four runs to get all of these. Unlike the PS3 version, Survivor isn't locked to begin with – just do your first run on whatever difficulty you're most comfortable with and when you come to do a Survivor difficulty run, all the remaining Trophies here will also pop when you finish the game.



THE LAST OF US - SURVIVOR+

COMPLETE THE GAME ON SURVIVOR

■ **JUST LIKE BEFORE**, these New Game+ Trophies all stack but once again, it's the last one that will prove problematic. Still, finishing the game on Survivor+ will unlock every lower difficulty Trophy – your first run can be on any difficulty and so long as your New Game+ run is done on Survivor (or Grounded, if you're feeling crazy/want the two new Trophies), all eight difficulty Trophies will pop.

LOOK FOR THE LIGHT

■ **THESE TAGS ARE** among the trickier collectibles to round up as they are so small. Still, as with most other things, they glimmer when you approach them. Here's where to find all of them – bear in mind that to save ammo, out-of-reach Pendants can be dislodged from trees and other such spots by tossing nearby debris at them rather than trying to shoot them down.

THE QUARANTINE ZONE: 3

BEYOND THE WALL

DAVID MICHAEL VIGIL – While following Tess, check out the back room after climbing the ladder – follow the stairs down and find it on the table in the back.

BEN GLUECK – After crossing the plank, keep an eye out for a large tree in the courtyard. This is hanging in its branches, so knock it down and grab it.

THE CARGO

PHILIP LIU – When you get outside and are alone with Ellie for the first time, check near the bodies nearby to find this.

THE OUTSKIRTS: 4

DOWNTOWN

JOSEPH LENZ – Once you can see the capitol building, head around the back of the nearby house to find this hanging up in a tree nearby.

MUSEUM

MICHAEL KIPER – Shortly after the first workbench, follow the path up and climb a ledge to find this Firefly pendant in a display case.

THE CAPITOL BUILDING

MELINDA DAVIDSON – In the flooded area near the capitol building. Check the circular pillared area near the steps and you should find it submerged.

SHIYAO JIANG – After the underwater section in the subway, swim on from where you find the Smuggler's Note to find this in an underwater office.

BILL'S TOWN: 3

THE WOODS

HUI WANG – Climb up onto the RV parked in front of the record store to find this – clamber onto the nearby police car to reach it.

SAFEHOUSE

ALEX RAYMOND VINCENT – You'll reach a church on your way to the safehouse. Check out the streetlights near the ambulance to find this hanging from one of them.

GRAVEYARD

PETER MROZIC – Keep an eye out for a fairly large blue house – this can be found in the laundry room.

PITTSBURGH: 3

ALONE AND FORSAKEN

KAZDEN RISK – Near the occupied checkpoint, sneak outside and down an alleyway to find this pendant behind an overturned cart.

HOTEL LOBBY

COLBY REED – After jumping down the stairs, you'll find a hall with drinking fountains and ATMs. Pop into the bathroom here to find this.

ESCAPE THE CITY

LUCAS RIOS – Another bathroom secret, this. Shortly after you meet Henry and Sam, there's a house after climbing up several times – it's in there.

THE SUBURBS: 3

SEWERS

JOSH SCHEFFLER – After washing up on the shore, head to the large blue boat and drop down into the lower hold.

ROBERT RIGHETTI – In the sewers, you'll see a small waterfall on your right. Clamber up into the passage and follow it to find a pendant, among other loot.

EDDIE FUENTES – Find the yellow car that has crashed through the ceiling into a flooded area and swim down to it.

TOMMY'S DAM: 2

HYDROELECTRIC DAM

RYAN OLIVERIO – Where the turbines are being repaired, head down to the lower level to find this in a locker.

RANCH HOUSE

BRENT PINO – When you find Ellie's horse, head into the nearby house to find this at the back.

THE UNIVERSITY: 5

GO BIG HORNS

HOPE PINO – After finding the Firefly sniper nest, head up the stairs and check the yellow tree in the dead end alley.

ALEX ROHNER – Restore the power but don't leave the area just yet. Instead, climb the dumpster to reach the blown-out first floor classroom.

JOE WARREN – Dropped by a Bloater in the dorms. Kill it and grab it, if you can...

ERIK GRIGGS – In the area with all the white tents. This pendant is in the furthest away.

SCIENCE BUILDING

SADIE PEARLE HICKMAN – Explore the room with the monkeys to find this on a shelf.

LAKESIDE RESORT: 2

THE HUNT

TRAVIS KRISTOF – When dealing with Clickers on the catwalks, one will emerge from a room to ambush you. This pendant is in there.

CABIN RESORT

PHIL D BRAUN – After escaping on horseback, you'll come to an occupied area with many cabins. Hang a right at the start and check out the gazebo.

BUS DEPOT: 3

HIGHWAY EXIT

KATERINA PERICH – Head down the highway off ramp and past a school bus to find this behind a crashed car.

NICOLE HOO – Shortly after you come out of the bus depot, this is hanging from a light next to a green tent.

UNDERGROUND TUNNEL

NATALIE HOO – After clambering through the bus, you'll come to another that you can't enter. Head round it to find this in an alcove.

THE FIREFLY LAB: 1

THE HOSPITAL

BRYONY STEWART-SEUME – Behind the 13th and final shiv door.

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EXTENDED PLAY

KILLZONE SHADOW FALL

Despite having been around since the launch of the PS4, there's a case to be made for Shadow Fall still being the best-looking game on the console. If you picked it up on day one and shelved it some time ago, or perhaps never played Guerrilla's stunning shooter in the first place, here are a few good reasons to head back into battle



INTERCEPT (DLC)

■ **NINE MONTHS AFTER** launch, *Shadow Fall* finally gets co-op in the form of *Intercept*, a horde mode of sorts that plays completely differently to everything the game offered before. It's an objective-based survival mode with a novel gimmick – points scored by capturing and holding command points on each map serve as both the victory condition and the game's currency. Spend too much on upgrades and you'll likely be overrun before you can bank enough points to win but, conversely, skimping on levelling up your abilities will see you trounced by the tougher

Helghast that pour into the map as each round goes on. Accrued points aren't yours to keep right away, either. These must be banked at a set location on the map, presenting more issues of its own – hanging onto your points increases the team's multiplier and brings in greater riches but fail to bank them before you die and they'll be lost for good, plus respawning isn't free and also eats into your team's total. With four classes to choose from, there's plenty of replayability here, and the community is only likely to grow now that a standalone version has been released.



KILLZONE MERCENARY (ALTERNATIVE)

■ **VITA'S TWIN ANALOG** sticks make it clear that the handheld was designed with traditional FPS experiences in mind, which makes it all the more surprising that so few developers have tried this and even fewer have succeeded. *Mercenary* isn't just the best-looking FPS on Vita – it's also hands-down the one that is most enjoyable too. Part of this comes from the fact that the score attack hook of the game is a perfect fit for a handheld, offering multiple routes and objectives per mission to give even more reason to replay them over and over. If you've got a little more time on your hands, online multiplayer is far better than it has any right to be too and seeing as how the game is Vita's best shooter, it's not too hard to find matches either. If you're looking for a game to show off what the Vita can do, this is it.



WARZONES (MULTIPLAYER)

■ **ONE OF THE** most interesting aspects of *Shadow Fall*'s online suite is the way map and mode rotation is handled. Whereas most games must reload between matches to dig up all the required data for a new game type or arena, *Shadow Fall* instead cycles modes within the same area. It might seem a bit boring but in reality, it's anything but – each different objective sends you to different parts of the map and it isn't long before you have a decent handle on the lay of the land. With more time to explore each area and more reason to cover every inch of ground, this learning process is far quicker and more enjoyable than in similar games, allowing you to get more from the multiplayer.



CAMPAIGN (SOLO)

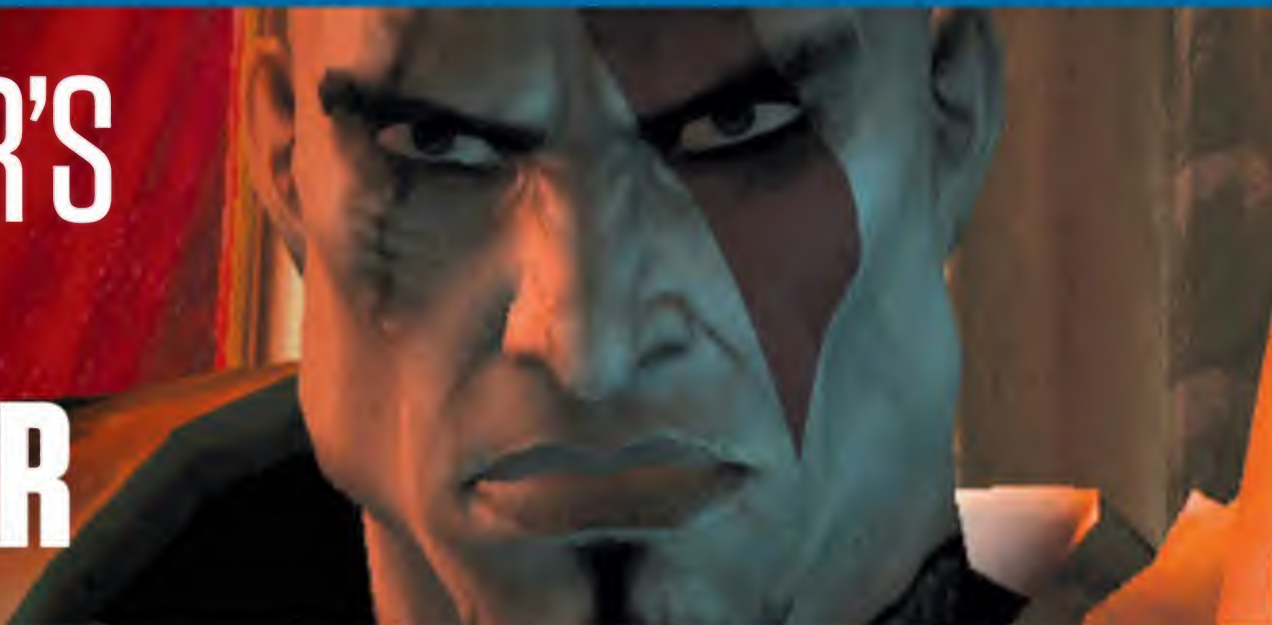
■ **AS WITH ANY** first-person shooter, there will likely be a lot of people who jumped straight into *Shadow Fall*'s excellent multiplayer without even considering running through the campaign. If you haven't done the solo stuff, we recommend you give it a bash – it's miles better than the single-player components of any *Call Of Duty* or non-*Bad Company Battlefield* game of recent years and as well as some neat ideas and cool gadgets, it's packed with those incredible vistas that stole the show when the first footage was shown alongside the announcement of the PS4 itself. Most missions are slightly more open than usual, allowing for different approaches and tactical use of the zipline tool – creating your own wire and sliding into the middle of a firefight is a thrill each and every time you pull it off. It starts off slow, sure. But stick with it – it's worth it.



REMOTE PLAY (OPTION)

■ **SEEING THOSE STUNNING** visuals on a huge 1080p TV is one thing, but seeing them shrunk down onto Vita's 5" display is arguably even more impressive. In the right environment (as in, no more than a few metres away from your PS4), the minimal lag and graphics far beyond the handheld's capabilities make Remote Play feel like some kind of technological witchcraft. Once you fiddle around with the controller settings to make up for the fact that Vita is two buttons shy of a DualShock (it uses the rear touch panel to make up the deficit, which is hardly ideal), the game is perfectly playable remotely – great for when somebody else wants to use the television.

THE BLUFFER'S GUIDE TO GOD OF WAR



THE MAKING OF A MYTH

■ **YOU'VE HEARD OF** *God Of War*, right? We doubt many of you lovely readers, loyal PlayStation fans that you are, have had no exposure to Sony's hack-and-slash hit series, but just in case we'll take it from the top.

The first *God Of War* came out on PS2 in 2005, late into the console's life cycle considering the Xbox 360 had already been released and the PS3 was on the way. It was the second game from Sony Santa Monica Studio, the first being an unremarkable sci-fi racer called *Kinetica*, released back in 2001.

Nobody expected much from *God Of War*, a third-person action game in the vein of *Devil May Cry*. It was from a relatively unproven studio and arriving on a console that a lot of gamers had already moved on from. A new IP so late in a console's life will always have a hard time, but *God Of War* blew everyone away with a great story, excellent graphics (for the time) and silky smooth gameplay.



THE STORY SO FAR

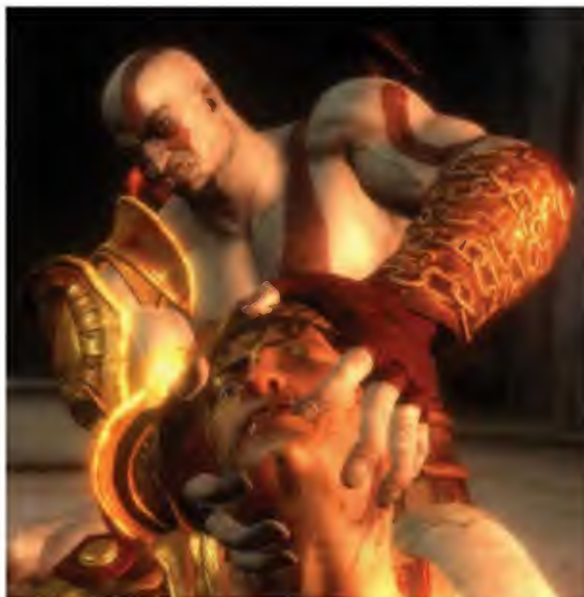
■ **GOD OF WAR** tells the story of Kratos, a Spartan warrior who serves the gods as a tool of their will. Kratos once dedicated his soul to Ares, the god of war, in exchange for Ares saving his life. However, after years of servitude, Ares tricks Kratos into killing his own wife and daughter, seeking to transform him into a perfect, emotionless warrior.

The result is not what Ares planned – Kratos is distraught, binding his family's ashes to his skin as a constant reminder of what he has done. He swears to never serve Ares again and wanders the land as a ghost of vengeance, working for the various other gods as a means of hopeless repentance.

The first game opens with Athena appearing to Kratos and asking him to kill Ares. Kratos journeys for weeks to find

Pandora's Box – an artefact capable of granting him great power – and eventually slays Ares. However, his guilt does not leave him, and just as Kratos throws himself off a cliff in an attempt to end his own suffering, Athena and Zeus raise him to Olympus and crown him the new god of war.

The other gods eventually turn on Kratos too, and the next two games are a veritable bloodbath as the Ghost Of Sparta cuts his way through just about every Greek god and mythological creature ever created in one of the greatest revenge tales of our time. *God Of War III* ends with our hero's mission seemingly complete, but his own fate is also left unconfirmed. Will we ever see another adventure for Kratos, or is his bloody crusade complete?



WHERE TO START

■ **THERE ARE A** bunch of options when it comes to jumping into *God Of War*, as every game has been released in some form on PS3. The first two games received an HD update in 2009 as part of the *God Of War Collection*, and the two PSP spin-offs later got the same treatment called *God Of War: Origins Collection*. All four games along with *God Of War III* later got a complete collection, *God Of War Saga*, although this only ever came out in America.

Still, importing it is easy enough, and *Saga* is definitely your best bet – five of the six current *God Of War* games in one place. While the first game doesn't hold up quite as well as the others, it's worth starting from the beginning.

Luckily, *God Of War II* is even better, building on everything that made the first game remarkable and perfecting the formula. Still, resist the temptation to skip straight to the second one and make sure you finish the first game – you'll appreciate the others more as a result.



ANY SPIN-OFFS?

■ **BESIDES THE THREE** main games, there are three prequels that detail Kratos's early years. *Chains Of Olympus* and *Ghost Of Sparta* were developed by Ready At Dawn and graced the PSP, both making masterful use of the hardware and offering the full *God Of War* experience on the tiny system. The two were later collected together and re-released in HD on PS3.

Sony Santa Monica also released *God Of War: Ascension* on PS3 last year, another prequel that added multiplayer to the series for the first time. All three games are good and worth your time if you fancy more *God Of War*, although none are even remotely necessary from a narrative standpoint. There was also a mobile phone game, *God Of War: Betrayal*, in 2007, although we can't say we've ever played it...



ANYTHING BESIDES GAMES?

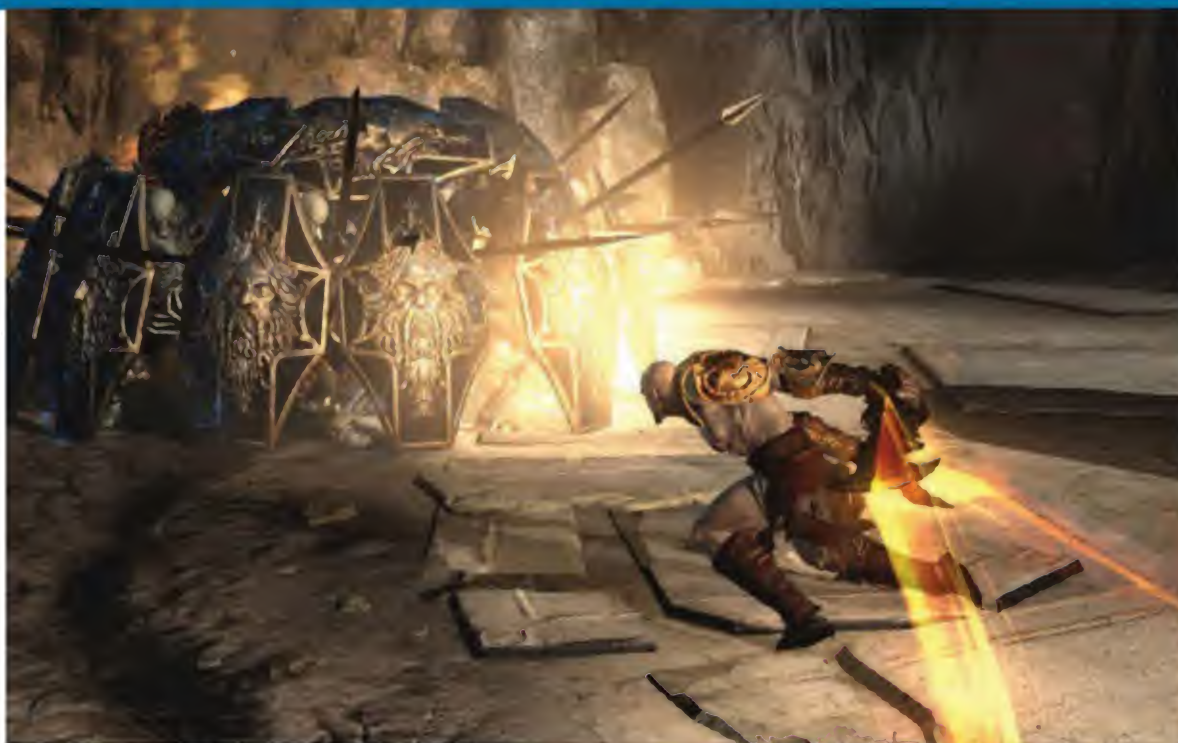
■ A film adaptation of the series has been in the works for years, but seems caught in limbo, with multiple sources saying it's unlikely to ever come to fruition. There have also been novelisations of the first two games, as well as a six-issue comic series in 2010. There is even a heavy metal EP – *God Of War: Blood & Metal* – featuring various artists on Roadrunner Records with new songs that are 'inspired' by the series.

SO WHAT NEXT?



■ **WHILE THERE WERE** rumours going into E3 this year that Sony would announce a new *God Of War* for PS4, the series has been quiet since *Ascension*. *God Of War III* ended on a relatively conclusive note, albeit one that leaves things open enough for a sequel. We could always see yet another prequel, but that well seems to be running pretty dry by now.

So will we see another *God Of War*? Probably. It made Sony a ton of money, and this is a business at the end of the day. Besides, *God Of War III* looked phenomenal on PS3, so just imagine how good a PS4 entry in the series could be.



TROPHY GUIDE

PS PLUS
TROPHY GUIDE

Things picked up a bit for PS4 PS Plus owners in July; not only did we get two games, but they were actually pretty good. Local multiplayer game *Towerfall Ascension* was the 'main' one, though the inclusion of *Strider* on PS4 was a decent surprise. *Dead Space 3* and 2D puzzle platformer *Vessel* were your prizes on PS3, while PS Vita got a fairly weak pair in *Doki Doki Universe* and *Lego Batman 2: DC Superheroes*



TOWERFALL ASCENSION

PLATFORM: PS4 **DIFFICULTY:** 4/5 **TROPHIES:** 17 0 0 4 13

■ **THERE ISN'T A Platinum** for this one, and considering you'll need a good few hours to unlock all the Trophies you might not think it's worth it. Some of these hours will be spent repeating Trials as you perfect them for diamond times, as well as playing 20,000 Versus games to unlock 'Massive Mythology'. Hopefully you've got some friends to play with, otherwise that will be a very boring Trophy indeed. To tick off the majority of Trophies, you'll need to complete every stage on Hardcore, collect 36 diamonds in the Trials (to ensure you reach that under two minute requirement for 'Time Lord') and the rest will come naturally. As great as it is, there isn't really *that* much to *Towerfall Ascension* that you'll want to stick with it for the necessary hours of practice, truth be told.



STRIDER

PLATFORM: PS4 **DIFFICULTY:** 1/5 **TROPHIES:** 31 1 3 20 7

■ **FOR THE MOST** part the Trophies in *Strider* will largely unlock as part of your natural progression, either through story-related unlocks, finding all the collectibles or defeating enemies with a particular weapon. You do have to complete the game in under four hours and on the hardest difficulty, however, and those two aren't likely to coincide. Instead, complete the game on Hard – to get a feel for it – and then play it on Normal difficulty to complete it a second time, this time racing through the levels and ignoring as many enemies as possible. It's actually pretty easy: just spam the Option-C ability to get you through most fights. There's also 'Didn't Miss a Beat', where you must survive the Balrog section towards the end of the game without falling to your death: you'll need to take your time, as well as double-jumps and catapult abilities to make larger gaps. Also, use the purple boomerang weapon to defeat any enemies ahead of you that you can since they could knock you off mid-air. Apart from that, it's a very simple bunch of Trophies.





DEAD SPACE 3

PLATFORM: PS3

DIFFICULTY: 3/5

TROPHIES: 51 🏆 1 🏆 2 🏆 7 🏆 41

■ NOW ORDINARILY, COMPLETING *Dead Space 3* on Hardcore and Pure Survival Modes would be pretty tricky, but if you complete the game once and then again on Classic Mode (returns the game to being similar to the original *Dead Space*) then you'll unlock the Devil's Horns weapon. This foam finger is an insta-kill on any enemy and though its use in tougher difficulties was patched out, you can still use it if you delete the patch data (and cancel any further patches when booting the game up) from the Game Data folder on the PS3. This will make these tougher modes easier, quicker and much more tolerable. As ever there are collectibles, upgrades, crafting and kill-based Trophies to keep an eye on, but there's also the return of Peng too. This series tradition has you collecting a unique collectible item – named Peng – which can be found on the Chapter 14 Optional Mission: Reaper Barracks. As part of the level you'll need to pass a spiked piston-trap, which launches a wall of spikes at you. Pass the trap then – once the room beyond is safe – slow the trap with stasis as it heads the way you came: behind the trap, beneath the bottom-right piston, is the Peng collectible you need.

VESSEL

PLATFORM: PS3 DIFFICULTY: 1/5

TROPHIES: 19 🏆 0 🏆 0 🏆 2 🏆 17

■ **VESSEL IS A** smaller title and, as a result, has very few Trophies to actually hunt. Luckily it won't take much effort to get all of them – and a large portion of them will come naturally – but there are a handful of things to look out for. First you'll need to ensure you fix every machine, windmill and extractor in the game – tick them off as you go, or make mental notes of the ones you can't yet do. There are three Trophies associated with creating different combinations of Fluro and water, so experiment every time you get something new to play with. Lastly there's 'Perfect Dry Run', a Trophy that is self-explanatory but worth remembering: when you're travelling through the caves back to the workshop, simply make sure your light doesn't touch any water. Job done.



LEGO BATMAN 2: DC SUPERHEROES

PLATFORM: VITA DIFFICULTY: 1/5

TROPHIES: 32 🏆 1 🏆 6 🏆 9 🏆 16

■ **AT THIS POINT** it's almost redundant explaining how the Trophies work in Lego games. Complete the game, unlock the characters, replay stages to find all those collectibles and generally bash *everything* until you collect enough studs. The only difference with *Lego Batman 2* is the addition of Justice League challenges, a set of combat missions where you defeat waves of enemies. Not inherently difficult – this is a Lego game, after all – however to get the necessary gold rating, you're going to want to avoid losing lives if possible. Remember stunning enemies is the easiest way of dispatching them, and should you come up against anything with rockets or explosives, find a hiding spot to take a respite between the attacks. And that's really all there is to it.

DOKI-DOKI UNIVERSE

PLATFORM: VITA

DIFFICULTY: 0/5

TROPHIES: 14 🏆 0 🏆 1 🏆 2 🏆 11

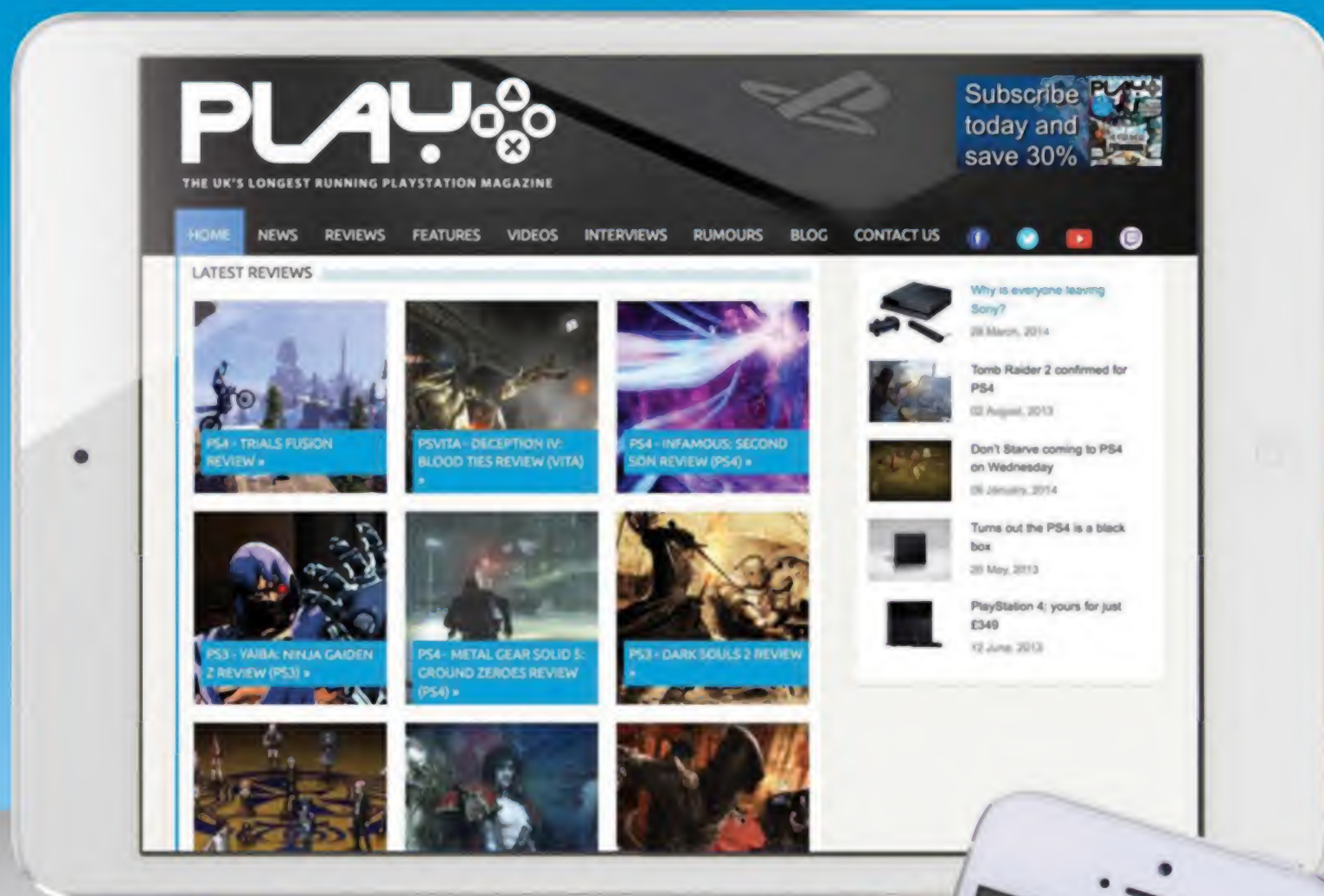
■ **IF YOU DO** decide to play this, then there's no reason why you can't easily get 100 per cent of the Trophies with just a little bit more effort than simply completing the game. Almost all of the Trophies you'll get as part of the progress towards the end of the game, but as you do you should try and tick off not only the main requests but also the presents you can collect from people. Press Triangle to open up the menu to find out who has a gift to give you; there will be two icons, a heart (meaning you need to make them happy) or a skull (meaning you need to make them upset or scared). The solutions to each of these can be a little irritating to figure out, so just experiment with everything and the presents will be ticked off, eventually unlocking the final Trophy 'Just like a real boy'.



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TABLET

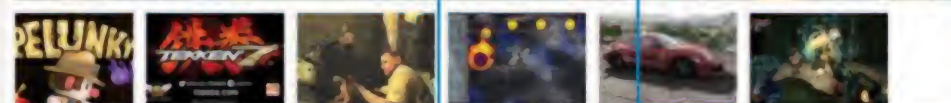
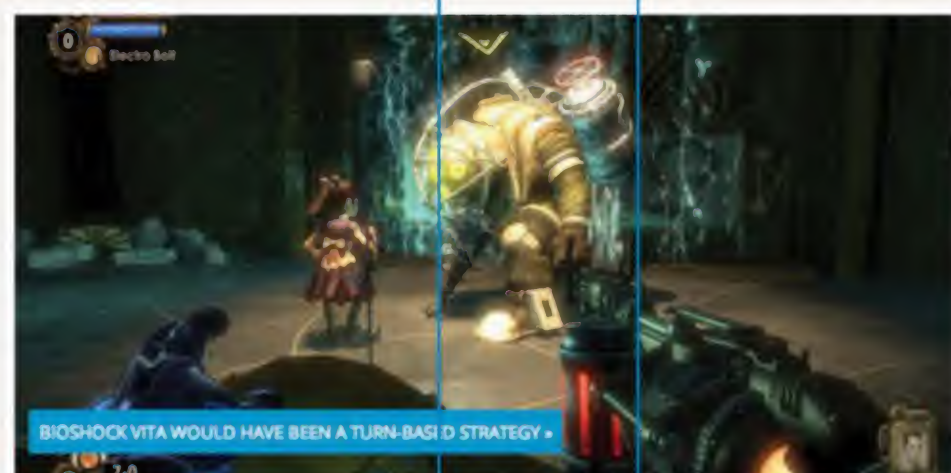
- ▲ A touch-friendly new interface
- ◻ Optimised to display perfectly on tablets
- Tons of PlayStation content at your fingertips
- ✕ Integrated video playback via YouTube

SMARTPHONE

- ▲ The same great content, only smaller!
- ◻ Adjusts to screen size and orientation
- Easily searched database of PS4 content
- ✕ Get the latest news and trailers on the go

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LATEST NEWS

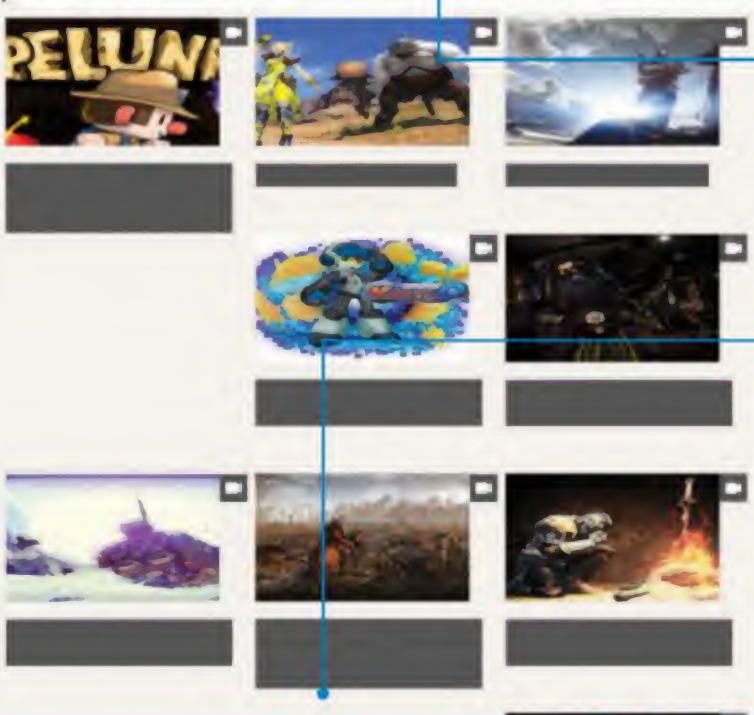


ROGUE LEGACY COMING TO PS4, PS3, VITA ON JULY 30
Popular indie game Rogue Legacy will include cross-buy and cross-save...

PS4: CHECK OUT DRIVECLUB'S DYNAMIC WEATHER
Two new clips of the PS4 exclusive racer...

BIOSHOCK VITA WOULD HAVE BEEN A TURN-BASED STRATEGY
BioShock Vita game would have been similar to Final Fantasy Tactics...

LATEST VIDEOS



POPULAR POSTS

- David Cage: 'I'll be dead before game stories rival movies'
23 May, 2014
- Why is everyone leaving Sony?
28 March, 2014
- Xbox One without Kinect: £350 is still too much
13 May, 2014
- PS4 PS3 PS Vita PS Plus July 2014 Line-Up (Asia)
15 June, 2014
- Tomb Raider 2 confirmed for PS4
02 August, 2013

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100 NEW GAMES

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Expand

Play Magazine @PlayMag_UK 22h
So @luckybobby80 lives up to his name - check your DMs for a PS4 Destiny beta code, and have fun!
Expand

FOLLOW

Make sure to check out Play on all our social media accounts to keep up to date with the magazine and PlayStation news from around the world, posted as soon as it happens.

DISCOVER

The slider shows off the most important stories on the site, complete with big pictures and text. Expect to see breaking news, opinion pieces and new trailers in particular.

CHOOSE

The top strap is your gateway to each section of the site. It's pretty self-explanatory, from reviews and features through to exclusive previews and PlayStation rumours.

WATCH

Video content is embedded into almost every post, optimised to work perfectly regardless of your browsing device of choice. Done with reading? Watch a video instead!

BROWSE

Scrolling down will give you a look at the top stories in each section; a brief overview of everything that is going on in the world of PlayStation. We update this every day.

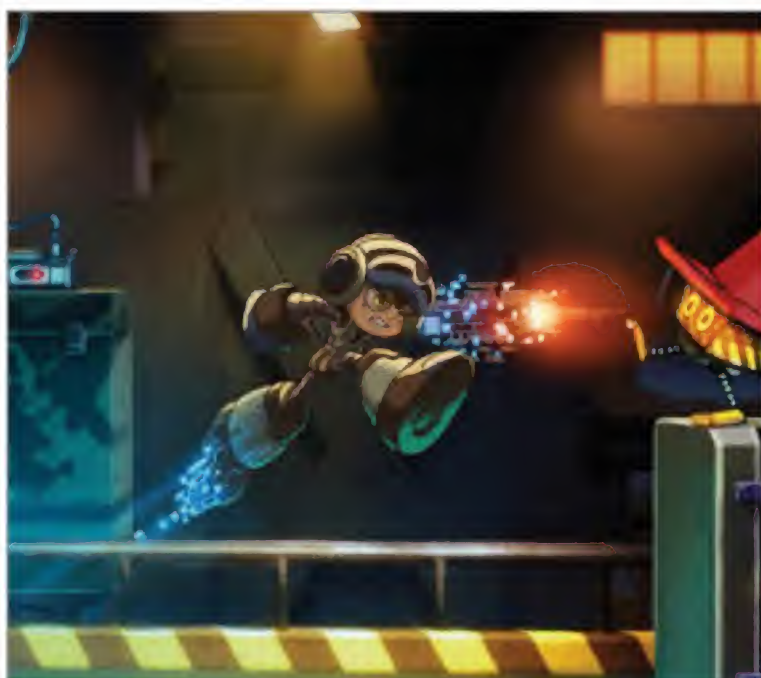
UNBIASED OPINIONS YOU CAN TRUST

PLAY-MAG.CO.UK

PLAY+ NEW PS4 VIDEOS

All the latest video trailers and features for PS4 are on our new website...

www.play-mag.co.uk



MIGHTY NO 9
NOBODY MENTION MEGA MAN



NO MAN'S SKY
TO INFINITY...AND BEYOND



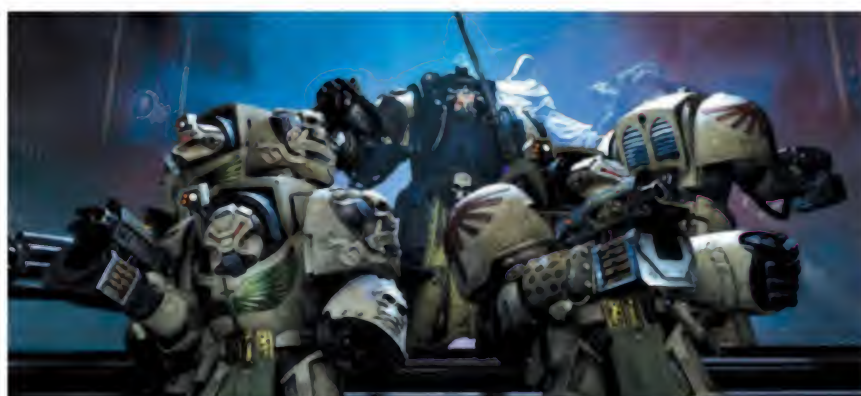
THE WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT
NOT LONG TO WAIT FOR THE RPG EPIC



MORTAL KOMBAT X
NOT SAFE FOR WORK



ASSASSIN'S CREED: UNITY
THE EVOLUTION OF A REVOLUTION



SPACE HULK: DEATHWING
THE WARHAMMER 40,000 SHOOTER WE'VE ALWAYS WANTED?



BLOODBORNE
A NEW SOULS GAME IN ALL BUT NAME

twitch LIVE GAMEPLAY STREAMING

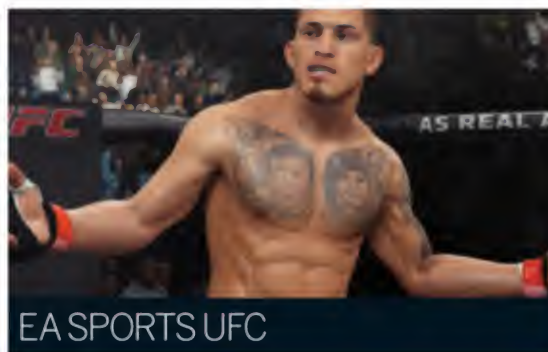
Join the **Play** team for live streaming events and shared gameplay

twitch.tv/PlayUK

TOURNAMENTS!

Keep an eye on our Facebook and Twitter channels for information on our Twitch tournaments, where you can play videogames with us for the world to watch!

The game changes each time, and the best players will win prizes – free games, or some of the other tat around our office. Come and join in the fun next time and you could win something neat.



EA SPORTS UFC



It's got some problems, but EA's new UFC game is one of our favourite multiplayer titles in recent memory, and the competition is fierce. Tune in to witness the **Play** family kicking each other in the face until nothing remains but gristle. It's not pretty, or graceful, or realistic, but it is brutal.

You Tube EXCLUSIVE VOICEOVERS

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PlayMagUK

Subscribe to our channel for PlayStation video reviews and previews

GOD OF WAR



OUR SERIES RETROSPECTIVE of *God Of War* goes back to the start before working its way through to the present day, and beyond...

DESTINY



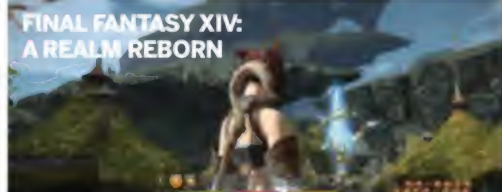
FOOTAGE FROM BOTH the alpha and the beta help make the wait slightly more bearable. Slightly...

BATMAN: ARKHAM KNIGHT



ITS BEEN DELAYED to 2015 but it still looks ace. Punch bad guys in the face or just drive the Batmobile. Either way, we can't wait.

FINAL FANTASY XIV: A REALM REBORN



A NEW PATCH means a new video. Is there still enough in *Final Fantasy XIV* to make it worth your time and money?

BORDERLANDS: THE PRE-SEQUEL



MORE BORDERLANDS IS never a bad thing, so we've taken the time to detail exactly why you should care about the upcoming spinoff.

WOLFENSTEIN: THE NEW ORDER



WHAT DO WE think of the newest *Wolfenstein* reboot? Take a look at our exclusive video review and see if it's worth your time. It's got Nazis, robots and Nazi robots, as well as a surprisingly good story. Do a watch.



THE LAST OF US

We became seriously addicted to *The Last Of Us*' multiplayer mode last year. We didn't expect anything from it, but it turned out to be fantastic, and we can't wait to do it all over again in a higher resolution! Come tell us how much we suck.



FIFA 14

Hot off the heels of the Imagine Publishing World Cup (won by production editor Steve), *FIFA* fever has taken hold of the office once again and competition runs deep. Can Steve maintain his glory or will designer Liam avenge his loss in the finals?

SHARING



PS4: THE COMPLETE MANUAL

If a monthly dose of *Play* isn't enough, check out Imagine Publishing's bookazine, *PS4 The Complete Manual*. It's a guide to your new console, from basic stuff through to advanced tips, along with a verdict on every game currently available. Pick it up for only £7.99 in any good mag retailer, or order one from greatdigitalmags.com.



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NOWGAMER

All the breaking videogames news, exclusive videos and expert comment can be found on our multi-format website... www.nowgamer.com

PLAY+PLUS PlayList

IF YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT A GAME SCORED THEN THESE PAGES ARE FOR YOU

TEAM PICKS PSP GAMES



top five LUKE ALBIGÉS

- 1 Monster Hunter Freedom Unite
- 2 Gitaroo Man Lives!
- 3 Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker
- 4 Dissidia 012 [duodecim] Final Fantasy
- 5 SoulCalibur: Broken Destiny



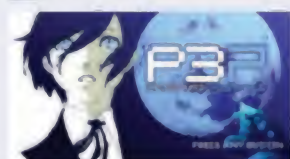
top five LIAM WARR

- 1 Football Manager Handheld
- 2 Burnout Legends
- 3 Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories
- 4 LittleBigPlanet
- 5 Rainbow Six Vegas



top five STEVE HOLMES

- 1 Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker
- 2 Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories
- 3 God Of War: Chains Of Olympus
- 4 Virtua Tennis 3
- 5 Gran Turismo



top five SAM SMITH

- 1 Persona 3 Portable
- 2 Final Fantasy Tactics: The War Of The Lions
- 3 Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker
- 4 Corpse Party
- 5 Mega Man Powered Up

PS4 LISTING

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag	237	83%
Battlefield 4	238	80%
Bound By Flame	245	62%
Call Of Duty: Ghosts	238	75%
Child Of Light	244	79%
Daylight	245	20%
Dead Nation: Apocalypse Edition	242	74%
Don't Starve	240	81%
EA Sports UFC	246	75%
Fez	243	95%
Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn	243	85%
inFamous: Second Son	242	86%
Killzone Shadow Fall	238	80%
Killzone Shadow Fall: Intercept	246	84%
Knack	238	55%
Lego Marvel Super Heroes	238	85%
Lego The Hobbit	244	65%
Mercenary Kings	244	85%
Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes	242	85%
Murdered: Soul Suspect	246	48%
Need For Speed Rivals	238	83%
Octodad: Dadliest Catch	244	60%
Outlast	241	73%
Resogun	238	91%



An addictive and accomplished shoot-'em-up, Resogun is an indie delight and a surprise PS4 launch highlight. Awesome stuff.

Skylanders Swap Force	238	77%
Sniper Elite III	246	72%
The Amazing Spider-Man 2	245	25%
Thief	241	70%
Tiny Brains	240	68%
Transistor	245	87%
Trials Fusion	244	80%
War Thunder	239	80%
Watch Dogs	245	80%
Wolfenstein: The New Order	245	78%

PS3 LISTING

007 Legends	225	44%
194 2: Joint Strike	170	74%
2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil	244	69%
3-On-3 NHL Arcade	177	62%
3D Dot Game Heroes	192	87%
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon	211	78%
The Adventures Of Tintin	212	58%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
After Burner Climax	193	91%
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Agarest: Generations Of War 2	223	43%
Agarest: Generations Of War Zero	209	52%
Age Of Booty	172	81%
Air Conflicts: Secret Wars	208	58%
Alice: Madness Returns	207	57%
Alien Breed: Impact	196	80%
Alien Breed 2: Assault	201	82%
Alien Breed 3: Descent	204	61%
Allies: Colonial Marines	230	45%
Aliens Vs Predator	189	79%
All Zombies Must Die!	214	64%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Alpha Protocol	193	83%
Army	215	19%
Anarchy: Rush Hour	194	73%
Ape Escape	208	55%
Aquapazza: Aquaplay Dream Match	239	70%



GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Aqua Panic	193	68%
Arcana Heart 3	207	79%
Armageddon Riders	207	65%
Armored Core: For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Armored Core V	217	60%
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	65%
Army Of Two: The Devil's Cartel	231	44%
Ar Tonelico Qoga: Kneil Of Ar Ciel	203	27%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Assassin's Creed III	225	78%
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood	199	91%
Assassin's Creed: Revelations	212	75%
Asura's Wrath	216	67%
Atelier Ayesha: The Alchemist Of Dust	230	60%
Atelier Rorona: The Alchemist Of Arland	198	77%
Backbreaker	193	70%
Back To The Future: It's About Time	204	71%
The Baconing	210	72%
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Batman: Arkham City	211	94%
Batman: Arkham Origins	237	85%
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield 1943	182	89%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	190	93%
Battlefield 3	212	88%
Battleship	219	44%
Bayonetta*	187	93%
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
Beat Hazard Ultra	213	79%
Beat Skekther	201	85%
Beowulf	161	61%
Beyond Good & Evil HD	207	86%
Beyond: Two Souls	236	70%
Binary Domain	216	70%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	88%
Bionic Commando Rearmed 2	203	61%
BioShock	172	93%
BioShock 2	189	88%
BioShock Infinite	230	97%
Birds Of Steel	217	55%
BlackSite	163	43%
Blacklight: Tango Down	200	64%
Blade Kitten	197	72%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
Blast Factor	152	72%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	190	85%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift	198	94%
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Bleach: Soul Resurrección	209	63%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Blokus	202	54%
BloodRayne: Betrayal	211	62%
Blur	193	86%
Bodycount	210	54%
Bomberman Ultra	185	82%
Borderlands	185	80%
Borderlands 2	223	90%
Borderlands 2	Borderlands 2 is an excellent lesson in sequel-making and is easily one of 2012's best games.	
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
Braid	188	93%
Brink	206	67%
Brothers: A Tale Of Two Sons	233	83%
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Bulletstorm	203	86%
The Bureau: XCOM Declassified	235	57%
Burnout Crash	211	79%
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%
Buzz! Quiz TV	168	82%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Buzz! Quiz World	185	70%
Calling All Cars	155	81%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3	212	88%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops	199	94%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops II	226	80%
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Call Of Juarez: Gunslinger	232	80%
Call Of Juarez: The Cartel	208	30%
Captain America: Super Soldier	208	70%
Castle Crashers	200	88%
Castlevania: Harmony Of Despair	212	67%
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow	197	85%
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow 2	241	81%
Carnival Island	213	53%
Catan	195	85%
Cars 2	208	68%
The Cave	230	77%
Catherine	215	61%
Champion Jockey	210	50%
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	87%
Child Of Eden	211	80%
Chime Super Deluxe	203	80%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
Clash Of The Titans	193	65%
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
The Club	163	80%
Colin McRae: DIRT	158	91%
Colin McRae: DiRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Commander's Challenge	185	68%
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Comet Crash	186	84%
Comix Zone	210	62%
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	165	78%
Costume Quest	199	70%
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Counter Strike: Global Offensive	223	89%
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Time 4: The Syndicate	218	37%
Crazy Machines Elements	210	71%
Create	199	71%
Crescent Pale Mist	200	70%
Critter Crunch	188	91%
Cross Edge	182	59%
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Crysis 2	204	72%
Crysis 3	230	61%
Cubixx HD	207	76%
The Cursed Crusade	211	40%
Damnation	181	38%
Damage Inc: Pacific Squadron WWII	223	37%
Dance Dance Revolution	201	52%
Dante's Inferno	189	80%
Dark Mist	164	53%
The Darkness	154	91%
The Darkness II	215	76%
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Souls	211	90%
Dark Souls II	242	90%
Darkstalkers Resurrection	230	82%
Dark Void	188	81%
Darksiders	188	83%
Darksiders II	221	86%
DC Universe Online	202	80%
de Blob 2	203	65%
Dead Or Alive 5	223	78%
Dead Island	210	79%
Dead Island: Riptide	231	65%
Dead Rising 2	197	78%
Dead Rising 2: Off The Record	211	61%
Dead Space	172	87%
Dead Space 2	201	92%
Dead Space 3	228	70%

THIS MONTH'S NEW ENTRIES

The newest games, freshly
squeezed among all your
old favourites

Killzone Shadow Fall: Intercept	84%
Sniper Elite III	72%
EA Sports UFC	75%
Murdered: Soul Suspect	48%
Ultra Street Fighter IV	85%
Grid Autosport	67%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Dead Space: Extraction	203	88%
Dead Space: Ignition	199	47%
Dead To Rights: Retribution	192	68%
Deadly Premonition: The Director's Cut	231	82%
Dead Nation	201	86%
Deadpool	233	60%
DeathSpank	195	83%
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Def Jam Rapstar	199	72%
Defiance	231	50%
Demon's Souls	193	92%
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	178	29%
Derrick The Deathfin	227	79%
Deus Ex: Human Revolution	209	91%
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
Devil May Cry HD Collection	217	80%
Diablo III	235	89%
Digger HD	186	52%
DiRT 3	206	85%
DiRT Showdown	219	84%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%
Dishonored	224	92%
Disney Infinity	235	81%
DJ Hero	186	91%
DJ Hero 2	198	88%
Doctor Who: The Eternity Clock	220	32%
Doom 3: BFG Edition	225	69%
Double Dragon Neon	224	37%
DmC: Devil May Cry	227	93%
 <p>DmC injects new life into one of the best genres in all of gaming, and does so with a style and confidence that elevates it beyond its roots.</p>		
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%
Dragon Age II	203	86%
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	61%
Dragon's Crown	235	87%
Driver: San Francisco	209	68%
Droplitz	184	91%
Duke Nukem Forever	207	33%
Dungeons & Dragons: Chronicles Of Mystara	233	80%
Dungeon Siege III	206	80%
Dust 514	233	51%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 2	176	43%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 3	208	56%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	189	37%
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Dynasty Warriors 7	204	32%
Dynasty Warriors 7: Empires	230	40%
Dynasty Warriors 8	234	71%
Earthworm Jim HD	196	89%
EA Sports Active 2	200	81%
EA Sports Grand Slam Tennis	215	75%
EA Sports MMA	198	89%
Eat Lead	178	38%
Eat Them!	202	60%
echochrome	169	85%
echochrome II	202	83%
EDF: Insect Armageddon	208	64%
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	91%
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim	212	93%
Elefunk	170	45%
El Shaddai: Ascension Of The Metatron	208	77%
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Enslaved: Odyssey To The West	197	83%
Epic Mickey 2: The Power Of Two	226	55%
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Euforia	212	85%
Everybody's Golf 5	158	88%
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	91%
Explodemon	203	70%
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	185	83%
F1 2010	197	86%
F1 2011	211	71%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
F1 2012	223	79%
F1 Race Stars	226	61%
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairytale Fights	186	51%
Fallout 3	173	97%
Fallout: New Vegas	198	88%
Family Guy: Back To The Multiverse	227	40%
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	172	74%
Far Cry 3	226	88%
Far Cry 3: Blood Dragon	231	85%
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	168	65%
FEAR	151	81%
FEAR 2: Project Origin	176	87%
FEAR 3	208	60%
FIFA 11	197	91%
FIFA 12	210	86%
FIFA 13	223	82%
FIFA 14	236	90%
FIFA Street (2012)	217	74%
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
Final Fight: Double Impact	193	90%
The Fight	199	42%
Fight Night Champion	203	88%
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn	236	81%
Final Fantasy XIII	190	85%
Final Fantasy XIII-2	214	80%
Final Fantasy XIII: Lightning Returns	240	80%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage	198	51%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage 2	230	58%
Flight Control HD	198	85%
Flock!	179	70%
Folklore	158	66%
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Fracture	171	72%
Front Mission Evolved	198	52%
Frogger: Hyper Arcade Edition	221	55%
From Dust	211	82%
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlelines	151	69%
Fuse	232	73%
Game Of Thrones	220	39%
Gatling Gears	207	62%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghost Recon Future Soldier	219	60%
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	183	22%
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	178	38%
God Of War III	190	88%
God Of War: Ascension	230	90%
 <p>With brilliantly reworked combat mechanics and stunning graphics, Ascension is a gloriously violent prequel to the series.</p>		
God Of War Collection*	188	93%
God Of War Collection: Volume II	210	70%
The Golden Compass	162	32%
GoldenEye 007: Reloaded	213	63%
Gotham City Imposters	216	78%
Gran Turismo 5	200	85%
Gran Turismo 6	239	83%
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	98%
Grand Theft Auto V	236	97%
 <p>Rockstar's latest is a masterpiece: the perfect swansong for the generation and a wonderful addition to the franchise.</p>		
Greed Corp	191	75%
Green Day: Rock Band	194	77%
Greg Hastings Paintball 2	219	22%
Grid 2	232	79%
Grid Autosport	246	67%
GTI Club+	174	72%
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	191	94%
Guardians Of Middle-earth	227	71%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Guitar Hero III	160	90%
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	63%
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	88%
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock	197	71%
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	95%
Gundemonium Collection	197	80%
Gunstar Heroes	181	85%
Hamsterball	194	72%
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heavy Rain	189	94%
Heavy Weapon	187	75%
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Hitman: Absolution	225	93%
Hitman HD Trilogy	230	75%
Homefront	203	69%
The House Of The Dead 4	218	82%
The House Of The Dead: Overkill	212	75%
Hunted: The Demon's Forge	207	59%
Hustle Kings	190	87%
Hyperdimension Neptunia	202	21%
I Am Alive	217	64%
Ico & Shadow Of The Colossus HD	210	94%
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
inFamous	180	81%
inFamous 2	207	83%
Inferno Pool	181	81%
Injustice: Gods Among Us	231	80%
Inversion	220	49%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	185	70%
Iron Man	166	58%
Iron Man 2	193	50%
The Jak And Daxter Trilogy	216	82%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	199	63%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
JASF: Jane's Advanced Strike Fighters	217	30%
JoJo's Bizarre Adventure: All Star Battle	244	80%
Journey	216	87%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Jurassic Park: The Game	194	60%
Just Cause 2	190	87%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days	196	71%
Katamari Forever	184	88%
Kick-Ass The Game	194	60%
Killer Is Dead	235	75%
Killzone HD	225	65%
Killzone 2	176	93%
Killzone 3	202	80%
Kingdom Hearts HD 1.5 ReMIX	236	80%
Kingdoms Of Amalur: Reckoning	215	70%
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The King Of Fighters XIII	213	76%
Knight's Contract	202	53%
Kung-Fu Live	201	42%
Kung Fu Panda 2	207	20%
Kung Fu Rider	196	65%
Lair	158	52%
Landit Bandit	195	66%
LA Noire	206	91%
Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light	198	90%
The Last Guy	171	91%
Last Rebellion	191	42%
Lead And Gold: Gangs Of The Wild West	193	65%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	173	62%
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Batman 2	221	80%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4	194	79%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 5-7	213	67%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%

*denotes import review

TOP TEN DISAPPOINTING GAMES



1
Game Of Thrones



2
Grand Theft Auto IV



3
Dead Space 3



4
Final Fantasy XIII



5
Yaiba: Ninja Gaiden Z



6
Beyond: Two Souls



7
Aliens: Colonial Marines



8
Assassin's Creed III



9
Heavenly Sword



10
Silent Hill HD Collection

PLAY'S BEST GAMES IF YOU LOVE...



LARGE NUMBERS PLAY: DISGAEA

The *Disgaea* games are known for having huge amounts of content, with characters able to grow to a ridiculous level 9,999 and attacks doing hundreds of millions of points of damage in one blow. Algebraic!



UNCHARTED PLAY: TOMB RAIDER

If you can't wait for *Uncharted 4*, try the reboot of *Tomb Raider*. A great re-imagining of a similar franchise, but it still has enough to set it apart as a unique experience.



SMASHBROS PLAY: PLAYSTATION ALL-STARS BATTLE ROYALE

It's not as good as Nintendo's famous brawler, but *PlayStation All-Stars* was a solid try at a Sony-flavoured take on the genre.



EXISTENTIAL MISERY PLAY: SILENT HILL 2

Still one of the best survival-horror games ever made, *Silent Hill 2* is a masterpiece everyone should play. Ignore the naff HD collection and find a copy of the PS2 original.





GREAT THEME TUNES PLAY: METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

Once you've played *MGS3*, the theme will never leave your brain. If the intro wasn't enough, that long, LONG ladder climb will cement it into your cerebral cortex. What a thrill...


GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean	206	76%
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	76%
Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	204	79%
Lego: The Lord Of The Rings	227	85%
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
Limbo	209	90%
LittleBigPlanet	172	94%
LittleBigPlanet 2	201	96%
LittleBigPlanet: Karting	225	85%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	159	80%
Lollipop Chainsaw	221	72%
London 2012	221	45%
The Lord Of The Rings: Aragorn's Quest	199	60%
The Lord Of The Rings: Conquest	175	52%
The Lord Of The Rings: War In The North	213	42%
Lost Planet 2	192	75%
Lost Planet 3	236	58%
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	69%
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%
Lumines Supernova	178	90%
Madagascar 3	224	39%
Madden NFL 12	209	85%
Madden NFL 13	223	86%
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Mad Riders	220	70%
Mafia II	196	81%
MAG	189	68%
Magic: Duels Of The Planeswalker	202	84%
Magic: Duels Of The Planeswalker 2012	208	70%
Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom	199	72%
Marvel Vs Capcom 2	182	90%
Marvel Vs Capcom 3	202	88%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%
Max Payne 3	219	77%
Mass Effect 2	201	97%
Mass Effect 3	216	93%
Medal Of Honor	198	86%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	85%
Medal Of Honor: Warfighter	225	72%
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Mega Man 10	192	82%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance	228	91%
Metal Gear Solid 4	167	92%
Metal Gear Solid HD Collection	214	91%
Metro: Last Light	231	60%
Michael Jackson: The Experience	205	58%
Microbot	202	51%
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mindjack	202	38%
Minecraft	240	93%
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	173	71%
MLB: The Show 14	245	90%
ModNation Racers	192	90%
Monkey Island 2: Special Edition	195	94%
Monster Madness	170	78%
Mortal Kombat	205	81%
Mortal Kombat Vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 10/11	204	64%
MotoGP 13	233	74%
Motorhead	173	60%
MotorStorm	151	92%
MotorStorm: Apocalypse	203	76%
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	93%
Mud: FIM Motocross Championship	217	50%
MX Vs ATV Alive	206	42%
MX Vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX Vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
naïd	201	61%
Namco Museum Essentials	193	60%
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
Naruto Shippuden: UNS Generations	217	53%
Naruto Shippuden: UNS 3	230	85%
Naughty Bear	195	64%
NBA 2K12	211	88%
NBA 2K13	224	88%
NBA Jam	200	68%
NBA Live 09	170	81%
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit	199	91%
Need For Speed: Most Wanted	225	95%
Need For Speed ProStreet	161	86%
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed: The Run	213	63%
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%
NeverDead	215	39%
Nier	192	54%
Ni No Kuni: Wrath Of The White Witch	227	85%
NHL 10	184	85%
NHL 11	198	89%
NHL 12	210	78%
NHL 13	223	74%
NIGHTS Into Dreams...	224	75%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
Ninja Gaiden 3	217	63%
Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge	231	80%
Noby Noby Boy	177	85%
No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise	206	89%
Nucleus	155	82%
Numbast	183	60%
Okami HD	225	90%
One Piece: Pirate Warriors	224	69%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Operation Flashpoint: Red River	205	75%
The Orange Box	161	93%
Outland	207	72%
OutRun Online Arcade	180	80%
Overlord: Raising Hell	167	65%
Overlord II	181	68%
Pac-Man Championship Edition DX	201	91%
Pain	183	69%
Payday: The Heist	213	88%
Payday 2	235	79%
Peggle	189	94%
Persona 4 Arena	231	91%
PES 2010	185	72%
PES 2011	197	73%
PES 2012	210	74%
Pinballistik	215	75%
PixelJunk 4am	220	40%
PixelJunk Eden	169	67%
PixelJunk Shooter	187	93%
PixelJunk Shooter 2	204	90%
PixelJunk SideScroller	213	77%
Phineas & Ferb: Across The 2nd Dimension	211	66%
PixelJunk Racers	160	74%
Piyotama	162	62%
Planet Minigolf	196	58%
PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale	225	80%
PlayStation Move Heroes	204	54%
Poker Night 2	232	55%
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Port Royale 3: Pirates & Merchants	224	54%
Portal 2	205	95%
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Prince Of Persia: Classic	173	67%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	193	68%
Prince Of Persia Trilogy	200	88%
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	191	40%
Prototype	181	76%
Prototype 2	219	75%
Puddle	216	76%
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%
Puppeteer	236	70%
Pure	171	80%
Pure Football	194	69%
Puzzle Chronicles	194	70%
Puzzle Dimensions	208	81%
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Quantum Conundrum	221	90%
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Quantum Theory	197	29%
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Ratchet & Clank: Q-Force	227	52%
Rag Doll Kung-Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rage	211	60%
Rainbow Moon	221	68%
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Rango	203	54%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One	211	68%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Ratchet & Clank Trilogy HD	221	88%
Rayman Legends	235	83%
Rayman Origins	212	80%
Red Dead Redemption	193	92%
Red Faction: Armageddon	207	62%
Red Faction: Guerrilla	180	80%
Remember Me	232	61%
Renegade Ops	211	78%
Resident Evil Chronicles HD Collection	221	82%
Resident Evil Code Veronica X	211	72%
Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City	217	33%
Resident Evil: Revelations HD	232	71%
Resident Evil 4 HD	210	93%
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resident Evil 6	223	88%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	173	90%
Resistance 3	210	88%
Resonance Of Fate	191	79%
Retro City Rampage	228	78%
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Ridge Racer Unbounded	217	67%
Riff: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Risen 2: Dark Waters	222	64%
Risk: Factions	202	80%
Rock Band Blitz	223	80%
Rock Band	169	94%
Rock Band 2	179	96%
Rock Band 3	199	84%
Rocksmith	223	78%
Rogue Warrior	188	09%
Rugby World Cup 2011	209	49%
Rune Factory Oceans	220	51%
RUSE	197	82%
The Saboteur	187	67%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saints Row: The Third	211	88%
SBK Generations	220	51%
Saint Seiya: Sanctuary Battle	216	52%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playground Ep1	194	90%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playground Ep2	194	92%
Savage Moon	175	87%
Saw	186	52%
Saw II: Flesh & Blood	198	36%
Scott Pilgrim Vs The World	197	77%
The Secret Of Monkey Island SE	195	92%
Sega Rally Online Arcade	208	74%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
Section 8: Prejudice	209	80%
SBK 2011	206	70%
SBK Generations	220	54%
SBK X: Superbike World Championship	193	67%
Sega Rally	158	92%
Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	198	76%
Shadows Of The Damned	207	79%
Shank	197	86%
Shatter	183	91%
Shaun White Skateboarding	198	70%
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Shift 2: Unleashed	204	66%
The Shoot	199	76%
Shoot Many Robots	217	81%
Silent Hill: Downpour	217	81%
Silent Hill HD Collection	217	76%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	174	64%
The Simpsons Arcade Game	216	54%
The Simpsons Game	160	82%
The Sims 3	199	87%
The Sims 3: Pets	212	70%
SingStar	159	80%
Singularity	195	80%
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Skate	159	86%
Skate 2	175	82%
Skate 3	192	86%
Skullgirls	218	88%
Sleeping Dogs	222	80%
The Sly Collection	200	84%
Sly Cooper: Thieves In Time	230	60%
Sniper Elite V2	218	52%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Sniper: Ghost Warrior	206	45%
Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2	230	55%
SOCOM: Special Forces	205	63%
Soldner-X-2: Final Prototypes	195	70%
Sonic Adventure	198	63%
Sonic Adventure 2	225	69%
Sonic CD	214	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode 1	199	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode 2	225	40%
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	190	78%
Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed	227	88%
Sonic Generations	212	70%
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Sorcery	219	76%
SoulCalibur IV	169	94%
SoulCalibur V	214	80%
South Park: The Stick of Truth	242	81%
Spec Ops: The Line	220	59%
Spider-Man 3	155	33%
Spider-Man: Edge Of Time	212	38%
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	197	69%
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Spin Jam	174	32%
Splatterhouse	200	58%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	153	79%
Split/Second: Velocity	192	90%
Sports Champions	196	83%
Sports Champions 2	225	65%
SSX	216	45%
Stacking	203	88%
Starhawk	219	81%
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	190	63%
Star Trek	231	52%
Star Trek: D-A-C	189	57%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	199	61%
Star Wars: Pinball	230	79%
Start The Party!	196	72%
Stormrise	178	51%
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike Online Edition	209	92%
Street Fighter IV	176	95%
Street Fighter X Tekken	217	83%
Strength Of The Sword 3	234	81%
Strider	242	62%
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	151	83%
Super Street Fighter IV: Arcade Edition	207	88%
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge	190	55%
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Super Street Fighter IV	191	90%
Supremacy MMA	211	40%
Switchball	191	75%
Swords And Soldiers	199	88%
Syndicate	216	78%
Tales Of Graces f	222	77%
Tales Of Monkey Island	196	91%
Tales Of Xillia	234	70%
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%
Tekken 6	184	94%
Tekken Tag Tournament 2	223	90%
Test Drive Ferrari Racing Legends	221	60%
Tetris	202	84%
Test Drive Unlimited 2	203	62%
The Amazing Spider-Man	221	61%
The Last Of Us	233	94%
 When <i>The Last Of Us</i> is good (winter), it's better than anything else this gen – we do not say that lightly.		
The Last Of Us: Left Behind	242	81%
The Testament Of Sherlock Holmes	224	55%
The Walking Dead	231	92%
 <i>The Walking Dead</i> should be required playing for anyone who considers themselves a fan of our favourite medium.		
The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct	231	20%
Thor: God Of Thunder	206	38%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 14	231	61%
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
Time Crisis: Razing Storm	199	58%
TimeShift	162	72%
TMNT: Turtles In Time-Re-shelled	186	57%
TNA Impact!	171	71%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Tokyo Jungle	223	81%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's HAWX	177	75%
Tom Clancy's HAWX 2	196	69%
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Blacklist	235	71%
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Trilogy HD	210	78%
Tomb Raider	229	90%
Tomb Raider Trilogy	204	86%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD	223	73%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Tony Hawk: Ride	188	52%
Top Darts	202	71%
Top Gun	198	53%
Top Gun: Hard Lock	218	45%
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Top Spin 4	203	60%
Topotai: Spinning Through Worlds	183	61%
Toy Story 3	195	82%
Transformers: Dark Of The Moon	208	64%
Transformers: Fall Of Cybertron	223	73%
Transformers: War For Cybertron	194	80%
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trials Of Topaq	159	50%
Trine	184	85%
Trinity: Souls Of Zill O'll	202	56%
Trinity Universe	194	61%
Tron Evolution	200	17%
Tumble	198	70%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	163	46%
TV Superstars	199	53%
Twisted Metal	216	68%
Two Worlds II	203	64%
UFC Undisputed 2009	180	90%
UFC Undisputed 2010	193	88%
UFC Undisputed 3	215	82%
Ultimate Marvel Vs Capcom 3	212	78%
Ultra Street Fighter IV	246	85%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	161	87%
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	185	96%
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception	212	90%
Under Siege	207	71%
Unearthed: Trail Of Ibn Battuta: Ep1	233	05%
The Unfinished Swan	225	78%
Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%
Vancouver 2010	189	76%
Vanquish	197	93%
Viking: Battle For Asgard	165	74%
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown	220	90%
Virtua Tennis 3	150	91%
Virtua Tennis 4	205	79%
Wakeboarding HD	195	65%
The Walking Dead: All That Remains	240	89%
The Walking Dead: 400 Days	234	83%
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine	210	51%
Warhawk	157	84%
Warriors: Legends Of Troy	202	14%
Warriors Orochi 3	217	59%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Way Of The Samurai 3	190	16%
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	178	72%
Where The Wild Things Are	188	56%
White Knight Chronicles	190	55%
White Knight Chronicles II	207	49%
Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?	214	79%
WipEout HD	172	84%
Wizorb	222	78%
Wolfenstein	183	72%
Wonderbook: Book Of Spells	226	80%
Worms Collection	224	85%
Worms 2: Armageddon	198	87%
Worms Ultimate Mayhem	217	80%
WRC: FIA World Rally Championship	197	76%
WRC 2: FIA World Rally Championship	211	63%
WRC 3 FIA World Rally Championship	225	75%
WSC Real II	204	69%
WWE All Stars	204	82%
WWE Legends Of WrestleMania	178	80%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2011	199	63%
WWE 12	212	50%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
WWE 13	225	55%
X-Blades	178	54%
XCOM: Enemy Unknown	224	94%
 Thinking, planning, failing and dying is back in fashion. <i>XCOM</i> is a phenomenal remaking of a classic title and an instant classic in its own right.		
X-Men Arcade	203	60%
X-Men Destiny	211	35%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%
Yaiba: Ninja Gaiden Z	242	35%
Yakuza: Dead Souls	216	60%
Yakuza 3	191	80%
Yakuza 4	203	79%
Yar's Rev	206	57%
Zen Pinball 2	224	90%
Zombie Apocalypse: Never Die Alone	213	69%
Zone Of The Enders HD Collection	226	81%
Zuma	182	78%

PS VITA LISTING



GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
A-Men	217	70%
Army Corps Of Hell	217	64%
Assassin's Creed III: Liberation	225	76%
Atelier Meruru: The Apprentice Of Arland	221	35%
Everybody's Golf	215	86%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift Extend	216	85%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops Declassified	227	18%
Danganronpa: Trigger Happy Havoc	242	85%
Dead Nation	201	86%
Destiny Of Spirits	244	76%
Dokuro	230	71%
Earth Defense Force 2017 Portable	230	82%
Escape Plan	216	81%
FIFA Football	216	80%
fiOw	151	90%
Flower	176	85%
Gravity Crash	187	85%
Gravity Rush	219	86%
Hotline Miami	233	85%
Hustle Kings	216	81%
Joe Danger	194	96%
Killzone: Mercenary	236	88%
LittleBigPlanet	223	93%
Little Deviants	215	69%
Lumines Electric Symphony	216	85%
MGS HD Collection	221	70%
ModNation Racers: Road Trip	215	59%
Mortal Kombat	219	83%
MotorStorm RC	217	81%
Muramasa Rebirth	234	80%
New Little King's Story	224	70%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma Plus	217	72%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2 Plus	230	60%
Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath HD	214	86%
Orgarhythm	230	55%
PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale	225	80%
Persona 4 Golden	228	94%
PixelJunk Monsters	163	94%
Puddle	222	82%
Rayman Origins	216	84%
Reality Fighters	215	52%
Resistance: Burning Skies	219	54%
Ridge Racer	216	48%
Rocketbirds: Hardboiled Chicken	212	82%
Silent Hill: Book Of Memories	225	32%
Sorcery Saga: Curse of the Great Curry God	240	70%
Soul Sacrifice	232	85%
Sound Shapes	223	88%
Superfrog HD	234	41%
Super Monkey Ball: Banana Splitz	224	78%
Sumoni: Demon Arts	230	46%
Super Stardust Delta	216	84%
Tearaway	239	80%
Terraria	232	85%
Touch My Katamari	216	83%
Toukiden: The Age Of Demons	241	86%
Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3	216	80%
Uncharted: Fight For Fortune	227	83%
Uncharted: Golden Abyss	215	83%
Unit 13	216	67%
Velocity Ultra	233	80%
Virtua Tennis 4: World Tour Edition	215	81%
Virtue's Last Reward	227	84%
WipEout 2048	215	87%

*denotes import review

PLAYING THE PLAYLIST

Watch out! Games!



WHAT
(have they been playing?)

Destiny

WHY (was it chosen?)
Hot damn, that game is addictive

LUKE ALBIGÉS

COME BACK,

DESTINY! Just as I finally grabbed the badass Scout Rifle of my dreams, the beta ended. Bugger. I'm really missing the game since Bungie shut up shop, as it was rapidly becoming my go-to game of an evening. I'd already fallen into the habit of checking my friend list and just joining a Fireteam with whoever was doing the most interesting stuff, with one thing leading to another until it was quarter past bedtime. In a way, I'm glad I now have to wait until launch to play more, though – my embarrassingly large backlog isn't going to clear itself, after all...



WHAT
(have they been playing?)

Mobile Suit Gundam: Extreme Vs Full Boost

WHY (was it chosen?)
Giant robots!

SAM SMITH

I RECENTLY

IMPORTED the Japan-only *Gundam Extreme Vs* due to being a huge *Gundam* fan, and while I don't understand much, I'm having a great time with it. Essentially a 3D, two-on-two fighting game, the amount of different suits to play as is enormous and a real treat for fans of the series. It's tricky as hell and I'm still figuring out exactly what to do and when – this is a technical game, and practice is key. Still, for *Gundam* fans, I recommend it.

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Cover image

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UK 0844 848 8404
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13-Issue subscription UK £51.90 / Europe £70 / ROW £80

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Printed by Wyndeham Heron, The Bentall Complex,
Colchester Road, Heybridge, Maldon, Essex CM9 4NW

Distributed in the UK, Eire & the Rest of the World by
Marketforce, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street,
London SE1 0SU
0203 148 3300

Distributed in Australia by Network Services (a division of
Bauer Media Group), Level 21 Civic Tower, 66-68 Goulburn
Street, Sydney, New South Wales 2000, Australia
+ 61 2 8667 5288

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ISSN 1358-9474

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